

TUNBRIDGE WELLS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Monday 16 April 2018

PRESENT: Borough Councillors Stanyer (Vice-Chairman), Backhouse, Dr Hall, Lidstone, Simmons and Woodward
County Councillors Barrington-King (Chairman), Hamilton, Holden, McInroy, Oakford and Rankin
Parish Councillor Mackonochie

Officers in Attendance: Nick Baldwin (former Senior Traffic Engineer), Lisa Gillham (Tunbridge Wells District Manager), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Carol Valentine (West Kent Highway Manager) and Mark O'Callaghan (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors McDermott and Podbury

APOLOGIES

TB44/17 There were no apologies.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

TB45/17 Councillor Simmons advised that he had been involved in arranging a meeting with residents regarding the A26 cycle route.

There were no disclosable pecuniary or significant other interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

TB46/17 There were no Visiting Members.

The Chairman noted that nine members of the public had registered to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 15 JANUARY 2018

TB47/17 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 15 January 2018 be approved as a correct record.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS TRACKER FOR APRIL 2018

TB48/17 The Board considered the Tracker. Comments were made in respect of the items as follows:

Tracker Item 1 – A26 Cycle Route

Pam Barnes, resident of Southborough, had registered to speak and commented that whilst she was generally supportive of active travel, the particular proposals were unsafe. Experienced cyclists had warned her of the dangers of vehicles exiting the many concealed driveways along the route. Narrowing the carriageway would decrease safety for cyclists. Progress for cyclists would be slowed by the need to stop safely before each driveway. Egress from many of the existing driveways was already hazardous and an additional separate flow of traffic would increase the risk further. The cycle

path would impede pedestrians who may not be able to hear bells or other warnings due to the noise of the heavy traffic. Previous attempts to provide a cycle path failed on safety grounds and the circumstances had not changed.

Margaret Borland, resident of Southborough, had registered to speak and commented that a lack of visibility around 18 adjoining driveways serving 28 homes was of serious concern. Owing to the high fences and hedges, vehicles exiting driveways would project more than two metres across the pavement before it was possible to see what may be coming. Less confident cyclists already rode on the pavement and tended to be travelling slowly, despite this there had been a number of near misses. Faster moving cyclists would be at higher risk. Cyclists travelling from Tonbridge would be heading downhill and likely to be going at speed, any attempt to emergency stop or swerve could put them into the path of heavy traffic. The plans looked reasonable but conditions on the ground made them very unsafe.

Scott Purchas, for Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group, had registered to speak and commented that a change to more ambiguous language in relation to the cycle route had been noted despite the strong support offered by a public consultation and previous meetings of the JTB. Funding was available and Traffic Regulation Orders had been issued for phases one and three with work expected to commence in 2018. Whilst not perfect, the proposed scheme was an important step in enabling more people to cycle in more safety than at present. Tunbridge Wells was a congested town with a fixed road network, cycling was an opportunity to move vastly more people. Encouraging cycling would reduce the number of cars and make necessary journeys easier, provide capacity for future growth, tackle health problems and reduce pollution. The A26 cycle route was critical to the Cycling Strategy.

Lisa Gillham, Tunbridge Wells District Manager, KCC, thanked the speakers and advised that comments would be fed back to the KCC Cabinet Committee due to decide whether to proceed on 13 July 2018.

Councillor Simmons commented that previous support had omitted this section of the route pending a solution to the safety concerns. The proposals were not the right solution. He was familiar with the conditions as he lived locally and there were numerous problems with the proposals in the area. He appreciated the desire to fill the gap between two sections of cycle route but he felt that it was not possible in the present circumstances.

Councillors Backhouse, Stanyer and Dr Hall concurred and added that the risks associated with the proposals were too great.

Councillor Lidstone acknowledged the concerns that had been raised but was optimistic that a solution could be found. People wanted to cycle so effort was needed to make it as safe as possible.

County Councillor Oakford clarified that the JTB could make recommendations but the decision would be made by the KCC Cabinet Committee and due to the cost of over £1m the KCC Cabinet Member would have final say. He added there were a number of challenges with the project and whilst he supported safe cycling a white line along a main road was not acceptable. A central section of the route through Southborough was originally proposed to have a 20mph limit but this had been rejected as it was on a major route and consequently the speed reduction had been removed from the consultation. The St John's Road end of the route was in such a

poor state of repair that it would not be justifiable to resurface just the edges for a cycle lane and the whole road would need resurfacing. It had previously been stated that the Southborough end would only be safe if the speed could be reduced but a report in October 2016 said there was no justification for reducing the speed which cast doubt over that section of the proposals. There were too many faults with the project and there needed to be a joined up approach. He added that no safety study had been undertaken which was critical for a project of this size and was necessary before a decision could be made.

Tracker Item 2 – Pedestrian Crossing on Major York's Road and Langton Road

In response to a question from Councillor Stanyer, Ms Gillham confirmed that the original plan for a pedestrian crossing at Langton Road had proven to be impractical and officers were looking into alternatives.

County Councillor Rankin advised that a local meeting had been held and agreed to pursue the matter. If a zebra crossing was to be considered a traffic count would be needed to determine whether the speed limit could be reduced. Rusthall Parish Council had been approached to consider contributing financially. She would also be putting some of her Members' Grant towards investigation work and noted that there may be an opportunity to improve access for buses as there was no paved stop heading out of town and buses disgorged onto the grass verge.

Tracker Item 3 – Carrs Corner

Jennifer Hemming, for Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association, had registered to speak and commented that use of the cycle lane on Calverley Park Gardens, which formed part of one of the main cycle routes into town, was unsafe due to heavy vehicles and speeding traffic. The feasibility study served only to pass off responsibility to act. The suggestion of residents' recording the details of HGVs was insulting and would be ineffective in helping over 2.5k pedestrians each day to cross the road. The support of members to pursue the matter was appreciated. If policy or political barriers could be overcome then solutions to the genuine problems could be found.

Jane Kingsley, for Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association, had registered to speak and commented that Carrs Corner was a key gateway to the town for pedestrians but only provided for vehicles, the junction needed to be more balanced. HGVs should not be able to choose their own short-cuts through residential streets, damaging pavements, blocking the cycle lane and polluting the air. The Residents' Association had pursued this matter in good faith for two years for a report of no further action. The problems were well known to the residents, councillors and the more than 1.5k signatories to a petition. Action needed to be taken to improve safety for the 1million per year pedestrian crossings at the junction. Detailed feedback and positive suggestions had been distributed to members before the meeting.

County Councillor Rankin strongly supported the comments of the speakers and added that it was only possible to cross the junction by relying on the good will of drivers. It was disappointing that Kent County Council's highway policies appeared to only be concerned with vehicles. She disagreed that through traffic was not a problem as there was still a high number of HGVs. Simple changes were requested to make conditions safer for pedestrians.

County Councillor Oakford appreciated the photographs submitted by the Residents' Association and felt more attention should be afforded to pedestrians. He commented that there was no reason for HGVs to use Calverley Park Gardens as a short-cut and advisory signs were not sufficient. He urged County Members to continue working with officers to see whether any policy issues could be overcome and lobby for changes to policy.

County Councillor Holden commented that the problem was indicative of a wider issue and he was working to adopt a Leicestershire County Council style model to exclude HGVs from 90 per cent of roads. He called for support from other members at a number of forthcoming meetings. Quality of life should take precedence over the economics of the haulage industry and HGVs should not be allowed through town centres.

County Councillor Barrington-King endorsed the Leicestershire model and noted that he would welcome an invitation to the relevant meetings.

Councillor Backhouse confirmed the dangers of Carrs Corner and supported efforts to remove HGVs.

Councillor Lidstone commented that HGVs caused significantly more damage than cars and cars more than bicycles so the cost of efforts to reduce the number of vehicles would be made back in savings in maintenance costs. It was a false economy to not invest in infrastructure and all forms of active travel.

Councillor Woodward welcomed the efforts to reduce the number of HGVs but was cautious of losing focus on the particular problem. The report suggested further discussions to be had but lacked any detail; a sense of urgency was needed.

County Councillor Holden commented that the amount of damage caused by an HGV was conservatively estimated at 10k times that of a car and Leicestershire County Council had funded the cost of re-designating roads through savings in maintenance. Focus on local issues should be maintained and similar problems in Goudhurst were being looked at with a view to reclassify the road as a 'B' road, on which restrictions could be placed.

Councillor Dr Hall noted that most heavy freight should be carried on railways. She added that it was not acceptable for HGVs to dominate town and village centres and many drivers disregarded the restrictions.

County Councillor Rankin sought written confirmation whether restrictions could be placed on the speed, size or weight of traffic on 'B' roads and the statutory authority of doing so, as accounts appeared to be conflicting.

Councillor Backhouse noted that many HGV drivers relied on sat-navs designed for cars.

County Councillor Oakford commented that there needed to be a differentiation between the law and KCC policy and noted that sometimes things are said to be not possible but this may be due to policy which could be challenged.

Councillor Simmons supported the comments of the speakers and called for specific proposals for what could be done to come forward.

Ms Gillham thanked the speakers and confirmed the comments would be fed back to the design team. She understood that discussions between officers and councillors were ongoing

County Councillor Barrington-King endorsed the request for clarification on what was possible on 'B' roads and a clear difference between policy and legislation. He highlighted the clear support from all members of the Board to make progress in this matter.

Tracker Item 4 – St John's 20mph zone (including Currie Road)

Councillor Lidstone noted from the written update that a resolution for Currie Road appeared to be closely linked to better enforcement of the 20mph zone.

County Councillor Oakford advised that a further £3k had been made available for 20mph roundels to remind motorists within the zone. Only the Police could enforce the limits but Speedwatch was a great help, over 30 drivers with multiple offences had been visited by the Police on the basis of evidence from Speedwatch.

County Councillor Holden commented that the Police were essential in enforcing the limits, people wanted to see the Police out on the streets and Speedwatch were becoming increasingly disillusioned by the lack of Police support. Some progress had been made but there were signs of backsliding which were being addressed.

Councillor Lidstone commented that the issue on Currie Road came about due to the narrow road and drivers using the pavement to pass; resulting in several near-misses with pedestrians. He was hoping for a report looking more specifically at the issues of rat-running.

Tracker Item 5 – Zone A and C

The written update was noted.

Tracker Item 6 – Five Oak Green

Parish Councillor Mackonochie advised that Capel Parish Council were awaiting the consultant report following the completion of a traffic survey and pedestrian survey. He noted that the traffic survey happened to have taken place during a period of snow and, worryingly, the average speed only reduced by 3mph.

Tracker Item 7 – King George V Hill

County Councillor Barrington-King advised that the matter was included in the report under the item at TB49/17.

Tracker Item 8 – Reducing pinch-points on A26

The written update was noted.

Tracker Item 9 – HGV Restrictions, Halls Hole Road

Councillor Backhouse commented that the road was clearly signposted but some drivers were ignoring the warnings.

County Councillor Rankin disputed the written update that signage was adequate as HGVs were still getting stuck in the road.

Tracker Item 10 – Cycle stands in Royal Tunbridge Wells

Philip Munslow, for Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group, had registered to speak and commented that a small investment in providing a comprehensive network of cycle parking could make a big difference and demonstrate that the Council was a modern, forward thinking and caring local authority. Good quality cycle parking in the right locations could provide the nudge for residents to realise it was easy to pop to town on a bicycle and park close to your destination. It would not be most effective to put massed stands in centralised locations, instead, one or two car parking spaces should be sacrificed as close to destinations as possible. Two car parking spaces would provide space for 16 cycle stands. Further details had been distributed to members before the meeting which contained a request for support for cycle parking, a suggestion of where funding could come from and ideas for implementing the project.

Councillor Woodward noted a lack of information on the usage of existing cycle stands and future demand.

Councillor Lidstone commented that Section 106 funds could be put towards the provision of cycle parking and agreed with the speaker that stands needed to be located around the town close to the destinations. He asked whether some of the funding put towards the proposed clusters of stands could be reallocated and spread out around the town.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, TWBC, advised that she would need to look into the possibility of reallocating funds. She welcomed the details submitted by the Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group and confirmed that both Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council would always take every opportunity to secure further funding. Conversations had been had regarding converting car parking spaces into bicycle parking but there were a number of implications which needed to be explored further before a commitment could be made. She added that there needed to be different types of parking for different users and it was important to also provide stands in secure places like car parks for commuter use.

Councillor Dr Hall commented that the level of demand for cycle parking must be evidenced to justify any loss of car parking.

Tracker Item 11 – Junctions of Hastings Road and A21 near Kipping's Cross

County Councillor Barrington-King advised that he had discussions with Highways England and been disappointed to be told that no measures could be put in place as there had been no fatalities despite a second fatality occurring only recently. He would be pursuing the matter further.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the comments made during the debate, the report be noted.

WAITING RESTRICTIONS: ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND PEMBURY

TB49/17 Nick Baldwin, former Senior Traffic Engineer, TWBC, introduced the report and explained that part of the report provided a follow up on a previous report regarding concerns about King George V Hill. The revised proposals satisfied all parties, were necessary on road safety grounds and involved the loss of only three parking spaces. Other proposed restrictions set out in the report received no objections.

County Councillor Barrington-King welcomed the approach of finding a mutually acceptable solution with the residents.

RESOLVED – That the Board endorsed the introduction of new and amended restrictions as proposed by the draft Traffic Regulation Order and summarised in the report.

WAITING RESTRICTIONS: WHYBOURNE CREST, RTW

TB50/17 Sarah Richmond, resident of Royal Tunbridge Wells, had registered to speak and commented that she had distributed detailed feedback to members before the meeting. She explained that the proposals were intended for the benefit of residents, rather than on safety grounds, in response to the increased number of employees based at AXA in Hawkenbury. Despite good intentions the proposals did not meet with the satisfaction of the residents and may be counterproductive. The proposals were being made on the basis of an erroneous consultation as residents had not been fully advised of the proposals and there had not been full disclosure of the available options on which the residents could give an informed response.

Kathy Freeman, resident of Royal Tunbridge Wells, had registered to speak and commented that a letter received from Parking Services on 13 October 2016 stated that no action was proposed for Whybourne Crest, despite this yellow lines had been installed without notice. The proposal to introduce a limited number of parking bays would cause friction in the community and be unfair. The majority of residents were against the proposal. Signed-only restrictions were already in place in some roads in the area; this would be fairer for the residents and would be consistent with the general scheme in Hawkenbury. If signed-only restrictions were installed there would be no immediate need for an amendment to the start time of the restrictions but residents would appreciate the opportunity to review this after the new school had opened.

Glenn McAuliffe, resident of Royal Tunbridge Wells, had registered to speak and commented that the proposals were not supported by the majority of residents and would cause problems. A lack of information may have lead to misinformed responses to the original consultation. The report oversimplified the issues and whilst most houses had off-street parking the space was limited and the restrictions would prevent deliveries and visitors from parking in the street, particularly affecting the high number of retired or homeworking people. Signed-only restrictions were in use in neighbouring areas and appeared to be effective. A recent survey of residents highlighted overwhelming support for signed-only permit parking.

County Councillor Rankin was concerned that the consultation should produce a different result to the views expressed and felt that the restrictions should not go forward without the support of the residents. She added that Whybourne Crest was a distinctive area which would be ruined by yellow lines and a less intrusive scheme which enjoyed the support of residents would be welcomed.

County Councillor Oakford noted members had a duty to represent the views of residents and there was clearly little support for the proposals, a mutually agreeable alternative should be found.

County Councillor Hamilton concurred and added that the local residents should be listened to.

Councillor Backhouse concurred and added that yellow lines should be used sparingly in residential areas so as to not prevent genuine visitors from parking.

Councillor Lidstone sought to clarify when restrictions were due to take effect.

Nick Baldwin, former Senior Traffic Engineer, TWBC, confirmed that the current restrictions were installed following previous approval as part of a package of measures, however it had been subsequently agreed to not enforce the restrictions pending further review. He added that the question of parking restrictions in Hawkenbury had been a long standing item; there had been many consultations over that time and often very few responses. Officers had tried to develop a scheme which satisfied the residents who responded to the consultations. Only after the restrictions were installed were a number of objections raised, consequently each house was written to and the yellow lines were still supported by some. Signed-only restrictions were only permissible where there was a uniform scheme and previous consultations suggested support for some form of mixed scheme. Much correspondence had been received since the publication of the report so it was proposed to withdraw the recommendation and start the process again. It had always been the intention to review the wider Hawkenbury scheme and this would provide an opportunity to revisit the restrictions in Whybourne Crest. In the meantime the painted lines, except the double yellow lines which were necessary for safety reasons, could be blacked out and signs could be removed.

County Councillor Barrington-King welcomed the pragmatic approach and wished to reassure all concerned that there was no doubt as to the integrity of Mr Baldwin's efforts to find a solution. He thanked the residents for their input.

Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement, TWBC, was pleased with the outcome and noted that the Hawkenbury review was likely to take place in quarter one of 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Board endorsed not implementing restrictions in Whybourne Crest pending new proposals.

WAITING RESTRICTIONS: CRANBROOK AND HAWKHURST

TB51/17 County Councillor Barrington-King noted that the item had been withdrawn pending consideration of alternative proposals.

Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement, TWBC, explained that since the report had been published representations had been received and it had been agreed to look again at the proposals. There were concerns that stark yellow lines through Cranbrook, being a conservation area, were inappropriate. Alternatives including a restricted parking zone or primrose lines would be investigated. A blanket parking zone had not been used outside Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre but this could be trialled with an Experimental Traffic Order in Cranbrook. This would be more expensive and a budget would need to be found. If successful the model could be used in Hawkhurst.

County Councillor Holden noted that Cranbrook had the second highest number of listed buildings in Kent including several examples from the 14th Century; this made it a unique place. Current lines were worn out and were not intrusive but new lines would not be appropriate. Primrose coloured 'heritage' lines were an option or a parking zone had been suggested. The difference in the cost of the two options was not significant and he hoped the Parish Council would be given a voice on the matter. He would be prepared to contribute part of his Members' Grant towards the project and added that further savings could be made by blacking out the old lines rather than removing them.

County Councillor Barrington-King welcomed the approach.

HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB52/17 Lisa Gillham, Tunbridge Wells District Manager, KCC, advised that there were no further updates and invited questions.

County Councillor Oakford highlighted that the traffic activated sign on Speldhurst Road had still not been connected to power one year after installation.

County Councillor Barrington-King noted that the installation of a handrail in Pembury had also taken one year but was now complete.

Councillor Woodward sought an update as to when Coach Road in Rusthall, marked for several months as having a temporary surface, would be completed. Ms Gillham believed there to have been a defect with the resurfacing and officers were awaiting the return of the contractors.

County Councillor Hamilton question why her contributions from the Members' Grant were not listed at Appendix H. She added that urgent action was required at Horsmonden in response to a number of recent road traffic accidents, the issue had previously been raised and she hoped to expedite the due process. County Councillor Barrington-King noted that the Leader of Kent County Council had expressed his wish that action be taken in this matter.

County Councillor Hamilton commented that many problems, including those at Horsmonden, were as a result of HGVs following sav-navs designed for cars and she asked how authorities could influence the routing of sat-navs. County Councillor Barrington-King suggested that the exploration from County Councillor Holden's work on HGV routing may yield useful information.

County Councillor Oakford noted that HGV sav-navs were considerably more expensive so foreign lorry drivers bought the cheap one and followed wherever it sent them. He added that the Leader of Kent County Council had instructed the Cabinet Member for Highways to take immediate action at Horsmonden.

Councillor Simmons asked whether the materials used for the drain covers on the A26, which appeared to have been marked for repair following nearby resurfacing, were up to standard and what could be done to ensure work was completed properly first time. Ms Gillham advised that the contractors were required to return at their own expense which would affect their profitability and ability to move on to other work.

Councillor Lidstone noted a paucity of road repairs set out at Appendix A and questioned whether full resurfacing would be more cost effective. Ms Gillham commented that resurfacing would be preferred. She added that the list set out the initial schemes for the year given the new financial year's budget. In addition, a separate budget was held for pot holes and reactive maintenance which would be scheduled in due course. County Councillor Barrington-King advised local members to discuss resurfacing requirements with the relevant county member so these could be fed into the system.

Carol Valentine, West Kent Highway Manager, KCC, advised that a more long term approach to asset management had been adopted and approved by Cabinet. This was separate from the money received from the government for pot holes which was ring-fenced for that purpose and formed a large part of the separate budget mentioned earlier.

County Councillor Oakford advised members to use the online reporting tool for pot holes which was by far the most effective way of getting them fixed. He added that there was a budget of £11.1million which included drainage works. Tunbridge Wells was recognised as having some of the worst roads so would get a greater proportion of the funding. County Councillor Barrington-King supported use of the online tool and noted that many of the problems he had reported had been repaired. Ms Valentine agreed that the online tool was the most effective way of reporting pot holes.

Councillor Lidstone noted that the recently resurfaced junction of Upper Grosvenor Road and Dunstan Road was already lifting and in need of repair.

Parish Councillor Mackonochie asked whether a record was kept of completed works to identify areas where works were repeatedly repaired. Ms Gillham advised that the works ordering system kept a record of every job and Highway Stewards often remained in the same area in order to build up historical knowledge. She added that resurfacing or large area patching was preferred but occasionally it was necessary to balance resources.

County Councillor Oakford reminded members that following the particularly bad weather emergency repairs were necessary which were accepted as only temporary fixes.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB53/17 The Chairman, County Councillor Barrington-King, confirmed that no items had been submitted in accordance with the procedure.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TB54/17 County Councillor Barrington-King noted this was his last meeting in the chair and thanked members and officers for their positive contributions.

The next meeting of the Joint Transportation Board would be held on Monday 16 July 2018 commencing at 6pm.

NOTES:

Councillor Dr Hall left during TB50/17
The meeting concluded at 8.15 pm.