

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **11TH DECEMBER 2007**

PRESENT: Cllr Burgess (Chairman);
Mrs E Tweed (Vice-Chairman);
Cllrs. Clarkson, Claughton, Clokie, Heyes
Mr M J Angell, Mr C G Findlay, Mr P M Hill, Mr R E King, Mr S J G
Koowaree, Mr D Smyth
Mrs A Murray – KAPC.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Cowley, Wedgbury, Woodford.

ALSO PRESENT: Cllrs. Link, Naughton, Smith.

Jamie Watson (Project Implementation Manager – KCC), Alun Jones (Programme Delivery Manager – KHS), Andy Corcoran (Senior Transportation Engineer – KHS), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Andrew Osborne (Economic Development Manager – ABC), John Burns (Parking Operations Manager – ABC), Jeremy Baker (Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

Albert Walton, George Harisis, Mike Hill, Les Brown – Ashford Construction Focus Group.

361 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clokie	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Ward Member and resident of Tenterden North Ward	367

362 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 18th September 2007 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

363 TRANSPORT FORUM

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the meeting held on the 23rd November 2007, which had considered: - Industry Updates and Discussion; Future of the Brighton to Ashford Rail Service when Ebbsfleet Opens; Ring Road Update and Ashford's Future Update.

The Chairman (of the Transport Forum) drew the Board's attention to the comments in Paragraph 7.2 under the Ring Road Update report, regarding the lack of left hand filter

lanes at Lidl's into New Street and Elwick Road left into Station Road. Members of the Forum had expressed concern about this issue.

The report also contained a recommendation to Kent Highway Services that improvements to Kennington Road, Willesborough that were in the Ashford's Future works programme be progressed at an early date on this major feeder road.

Resolved:

That the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum meeting held on the 23rd November 2007 be received and noted.

364 TRACKER REPORT AND WORKING LIST

A Member asked about the junction of Thirlmere and Grasmere Road where exiting right from Thirlmere resulted in a completely blind bend. The Tracker said that "hedge" letters had been sent to the affected properties and he asked if there had been any response. Mr Jones said he would report back to the Member on this.

The Ward Member for Charing asked that two items be added to the Tracker for consideration. Namely: - the need to extend the double yellow lines at Hither Field, Charing near the Station and at the Brenchley Mews Development by the school.

Resolved:

That the Tracker and Working List be noted.

365 ASHFORD MONORAIL PROPOSALS

Albert Walton, George Harisis, Mike Hill and Les Brown from the Ashford Construction Focus Group (ACFG) gave a presentation on a proposed monorail for Ashford. The tag-line of the proposals was "Bringing a "WOW" Factor to Ashford". The ACFG was a group of construction focused companies based in and around Ashford with a collective total of several thousand employees and the aim of these proposals was to achieve acceptance of the concept of a monorail to allow for a formal investigation to commence.

The proposals had come about as a response to the Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan (ATCAAP) released in 2006. The mission statement and aims of the Plan were commendable, but the main contention of the ACFG was that the Plan fell short of its aims by not having the necessary radical approach to alert investors to the investment opportunities that Ashford could and should provide. It was their view that the early proposed changes within the Plan simply brought the town up to a level of other Town Centres in the area, but did not raise the investment opportunity above other towns nor did it present a spark that would trigger any investment snowball which was essential to supplement the good intentions of the Plan. Other towns in the area already had their own "WOW" factors in built (Canterbury with its cathedral and heritage; Maidstone with its river frontage and county town status; and even now Folkestone with its coastal location and soon to be developed harbour/marina area). Ashford did not have such a factor and they believed this could be achieved with a monorail. Its benefits were twofold. Firstly it would make Ashford distinctive and give it something that lifted it above its competitors, but would also provide an excellent and sustainable transport solution improving connectivity. ACFG considered the main problem with Ashford was the connectivity between its disjointed satellite areas. The chief example of this was the McArthur Glen shopping outlet, which

should be better linked to the Town Centre. After all, the distance between the two would get less with Ashford's expansion.

Mr Walton explained that during the last 18 months ACFG had spent a lot of time developing the proposals and had already presented to the Ashford's Future Delivery Board, Transport Forum, Town Centre Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, as well as undertaking their own initial market research. Mr Harisis then gave a brief outline of these surveys. In this a monorail system had not been referred to directly because they did not wish to "contaminate" the evidence, however many respondents at the Designer Outlet had indicated that they did not use the current bus service because of the inconvenience and because it was not family friendly. 70% had said they would use public transport to travel between the Outlet and Town Centre if it was more convenient, and 74% had said such a system would make their shopping experience more pleasurable. 30% of people surveyed came from areas between Ashford and Folkestone, so there was a fear that better investment in Folkestone could result in people going there rather than Ashford.

ACFG then gave a brief outline of the benefits of monorails and the types of system on the market. They considered a radical approach was needed to keep Ashford on the landscape. The town was almost split into two by the railway station and proposed new bus routes were neither environmentally friendly nor brought a "WOW" factor. They would also have to use the existing, already overloaded road systems. The benefits of a monorail included: - limited land take; a greener solution; safety and reliability; little or no negative impact on current infrastructure; provision of jobs; offered an investment opportunity; low running costs; quiet; attractive; and provided a "WOW" factor. There were several types of system on the market and some examples were shown on slides. The choice of system for Ashford would be dependent on: - costs of system; speed of train; carrying capacity; distance between stations; number of change points available; and operation costs.

Mr Walton concluded the presentation by giving an outline of the current position and where they hoped to go from here. He distributed a booklet produced by ACFG which outlined the proposals in more detail. ACFG had estimated a potential capital investment, but there was still a lot of work to do. Once a feasibility study had been completed they believed a monorail could be delivered within three years, the aim should be the 2012 Olympics. They did not want to stop at this juncture as they considered it would deny the town the opportunity of introducing a truly sustainable and effective transport solution, which had the added bonus of providing Ashford with the "WOW" factor it so desperately needed. To take the proposals forward Mr Walton said that he wanted to form a Steering Group with the Council to identify further areas for investigation and how to obtain funding for a proper feasibility study. They believed they had the right people in their group with the technical expertise, enthusiasm and local knowledge to deliver this project working with other interested parties.

The following responses were given to questions and comments: -

- It was hoped that a monorail could work in partnership with existing bus services and the Quality Bus Partnership. However, new buses had to be rolled out every five years whilst the infrastructure for a monorail, once in place, would last so much longer. There would however have to be a phased approach working in partnership with other transport providers.
- ACFG was aware of the previous proposals for a monorail in the early 1990s which were commendable, but it had to be noted that monorail technology had moved on immensely since then. New monorails in Malaysia had been built by Hitachi and

taken over by the local Council as profit making, so this was an example of what could be achieved.

- A feasibility study could not be carried out by ACFG without cost. It would not charge for its services but there would be professional fees to pay. The size and influence of the Council could open doors that ACFG could not so Council support would be vital. It was true to say that there was a lot more detail needed, but it was difficult to put an exact figure on how much it would cost to put firm proposals on the table. It rather depended on how meetings with the Council could develop and whether the Ashford's Future Board could share results of studies on people movement that had already been undertaken. ACFG had not been part of these, but this would be vital information to enable the working up of ideas with Ashford's Future and others. ACFG had gone about as far as they could on their own, and now needed to work with others, particularly with regard to what grants were available locally, nationally and from Europe. If pressed for a figure on estimated costs for feasibility work, Mr Walton would estimate between £80,000 and an absolute maximum of £150,000, but this was dependent on what information Ashford's Future and others could hand over to the process.
- Disabled access would not be a problem issue. Other systems were totally compliant with access requirement including having lifts at stations and platforms which were level with the train floors.
- The height of the structure could vary to suit any situation. It could be low to the ground, above buildings, or a mixture of the two. It was key that any monorail was sensitive to the scale of the area.
- ACFG did not consider that a "WOW" factor would be achieved simply from the works to the ring road. It would certainly improve the town but would not encourage outside investment.
- Nearly all modern monorails were silent so excessive noise was not expected to be an issue.

In summary, Members of the Board were generally very interested in the proposals but wished to see a proper business case with more detail and financial figures before they could comment any further. This Board did not have a pool of money which it could distribute but if figures could be provided, they could make recommendations to the respective Cabinet and Executive of both Councils. Mr Walton said that in his view it was important for ACFG to meet with the Ashford's Future Board to share information and to have an understanding of what already existed. He was keen to set a date for meetings as soon as possible if the target date of the 2012 Olympics was to be met. The Leader of Ashford Borough Council said that as Chairman of the Ashford's Future Delivery Board he did not consider they would entertain any future presentations without a proper business plan. It was an interesting concept but in his view the costs would be massive and at the moment it was an idea that was going nowhere. He did not, however, see any problem with Ashford's Future making available the information ACFG were asking for. Mr Corcoran also informed ACFG that all transport studies on people movement were available via the Ashford's Future website.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted and the results of published Ashford's Future transport studies on people movement be made available to the Ashford Construction Focus Group.

366 PROBLEMS WITH OVERNIGHT HGV PARKING IN ORBITAL PARK

The report was the result of an analysis of potential options that Members wished to see investigated to resolve the lorry parking issues on Orbital Park. The report sought approval to move forward with one of the options, namely minor amendments to extend the double yellow lines to protect bends and access ways which would help to alleviate some of the safety concerns. Officers would continue to investigate the issue of clamping with neighbouring Authorities and the Police and would report back to the Board with further advice once more definite implications of the Traffic Management Act (TMA) were known. Mr Wilkinson further advised that all existing resources were already fully committed so any further work would require additional funding or Members' agreement to defer one or more of the previously agreed schemes or projects. In conclusion he thought it was important to emphasise that moving lorries on from the Orbital Park could mean that they appeared somewhere else, perhaps in a less desirable location.

With regard to clamping/removal, Mr Burns explained that he had carried out certain enquiries with removal companies and there were companies who currently undertook removal of HGVs. The infrastructure was in place for this to be dealt with in Kent. There were also no legal matters which would hamper potential progression with a scheme for removing lorries. However, the TMA did state that vehicles could only be removed if they were proved to be a multiple offender (three or more outstanding Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)). So this could not deal with all vehicles, but could potentially make a substantial difference to the situation at Orbital Park. There would be budget implications and the Council would need close support and co-operation from the Police, but it was another area to explore.

A Member said that lorries were starting to park in neighbouring residential streets such as Oast Meadow – a quiet cul-de-sac. He believed this was already becoming more of a problem issue than the Orbital Park and thought that proper signage was key. Satellite Navigation was also a problem as it often directed lorries down residential roads and roads they could not fit down. Mr Wilkinson said that this was a growing problem and it was because the Orbital Park was full to capacity so the danger of displacing more lorries from there was that they had to go elsewhere. His view was that the only solution was for the Government to fund a proper permanent overnight lorry parking location.

Another Member also emphasised the problem of lorries getting stuck in residential areas of South Willesborough and causing disruption at all hours of the morning. The "no lorry" signs to be erected in January would be most welcome. He also asked about the problems of pursuing unpaid PCNs across European borders. Mr Burns conceded this had always been a major stumbling block in the process. However an organisation called SPARKS (Shared Parking And Registered Keeper information Service) were making progress in getting vehicle registration information from the continent to pursue unpaid PCNs. This development was pleasing. He concluded by saying that he understood that this was a problem that greatly concerned the public and the Council wanted to re-assure them that they were doing everything they could but really and truly it was a national issue that was beyond the control of Ashford Borough Council.

The Chairman requested that a further report come back to the Board next year to update on the double yellow line proposals

Resolved:

That the update report be noted and the actions proposed be endorsed, with a report back in due course to update on the double yellow line proposals.

367 TENTERDEN IMPROVED – STATION ROAD/COOMBE LANE/COACH PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The report outlined the proposals for improvements to the Tenterden Station Road Coach Park and its surroundings. The proposals were detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The capital cost for the project would be funded through the Tenterden Improved Project and came from successful bids to the Channel Corridor Partnership, Kent Rural Towns Partnership and the Tenterden Projects Group. The proposals would require funding from both Ashford Borough and Kent County Councils to maintain the improvements.

Recommended:

- That (i) the general vision and design principles set out in Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.**
- (ii) as landowners, the development of the detailed scheme for the Station Road/Coombe Lane/Museum Car Park subject to a successful planning application, be agreed.**
- (iii) as landowners, the on-going maintenance of the new scheme on each Authorities land, be agreed.**

368 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER CONSULTATIONS FOR THE RING ROAD

This report was deferred to the next meeting of the Board as consultation had not yet been completed.

369 WELLESLEY ROAD NORTH JUNCTION WITH SOMERSET ROAD – CONSULTATION ON A PERMANENT CLOSURE

The report sought approval to proceed with a formal consultation on a road closure at the junction of Wellesley Road North and Somerset Road.

A Member said that he was happy for this issue to go out to formal consultation but he knew there was quite a bit of objection to this, particularly from the Ashford Driving Instructors Association who had raised safety issues. He therefore hoped that if the consultation did suggest the road should be kept open, then alternative solutions would be sought. Mr Watson assured Members that any objections to the proposal would come back to the Board and if the result was that the junction should remain open, they would have to at that point examine other options to make the junction safe.

Another Member said that she knew that the Central Ashford Community Forum would support permanent closure of this junction. People did see it as a rat run, cutting off a corner and three sets of traffic lights on the way to Norton Knatchbull and the North

Schools. The potential conflict from vehicles trying to exit across and into Station Road should also be considered.

Resolved:

That a formal consultation on the closure of the junction of Wellesley Road North and Somerset Road be progressed.

370 TENTERDEN & ST MICHAELS PARKING REVIEW

The report briefed Members on the outcome of the survey of on-street parking within Zones 1A and 1B of the proposed Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Scheme and off-street parking in Tenterden's public town centre car parks as requested by the Board at the meeting of 5th June 2007.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Pearson of Tenterden Town Council spoke on this item. He said that the Town Council objected to the parking proposals as they stood, although they did support some of the stated aims. They were pleased that the report recommended further consultation between Ward Members and Officers but asked that the Town Council also be involved in those discussions. There were also concerns about the validity of the survey undertaken in July and the car park capacity figures generated from it. There was a need for an additional car park in Tenterden and there were due to be workshops in Tenterden in January 2008 regarding the Local Development Framework (LDF), so Mr Pearson considered that this would also be the perfect opportunity to further examine parking and look for a site for a new car park. The Town Council therefore hoped that the Board would postpone further action on the parking scheme until: - the Board had been presented with the full details of objections; the Head of Environmental Services had discussed potential modifications to the scheme with objectors; the Town Council had been included in discussions with Ward Members and Officers; and the initial discussions on the LDF had taken place.

The Ward Member for Tenterden North said that discussions on parking in Tenterden had been ongoing for at least ten years but had developed to include a wider area in the last few years. He said it was probably now the case that the original complainants were no longer unhappy as they had recognised that parked cars were safer than a constant stream of traffic. The concerns now came more from the Chamber of Trade and Commerce because workers could not afford to park all day in the town centre car parks and they were parking in side roads and would be the ones displaced by the proposals. What the public did object to was vast areas of rural Tenterden and St Michaels being potentially painted with double yellow lines. Additionally if so many people seemed to disagree with the numbers in the survey this had to be taken into account. He was concerned that if proposals were put on hold until a new car park could be found as part of the LDF process, this would result in serious delays and although he would personally like to see the whole scheme dropped, there were a number of smaller issues that could be discussed with local organisations to alleviate a majority of the concerns. He suggested the Sayers Lane taxi ranks, Station Road, Hales Close, Ingleden Park Road and Homewood Road, all be looked at as soon as possible by a group involving Council Officers, Ward Councillors, the County Councillor, the Town Council, the Tenterden & District Residents Association and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce. In his view this was a better option than doing nothing and could resolve some of the main issues in the short term. He advocated a report back on these issues to the next Board and that the rest of the review should be shelved until a new car park could come forward.

Resolved:

- That (i) a meeting or meetings take place between the Ward Members of Tenterden & St Michaels, the County Councillor, the Town Council, the Tenterden & District Residents Association, the Chamber of Trade and Commerce and the Officers concerned, in order to evaluate what can be done to resolve the issues at Sayers Lane taxi ranks, Station Road, Hales Close, Ingleden Park Road and Homewood Road.**
- (ii) the conclusion of these meeting be included in a report back to the Board.**
- (iii) the rest of the review be put on hold until a site for a new car park in Tenterden can come forward as part of the Local Development Framework process.**

371 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004

The report detailed how the Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 would be implemented in March 2008 and listed some of the implications for Ashford Borough Council. The report also requested Executive approval for the new tariff for Penalty Charge Notices. Mr Burns explained that the Act contained significant and major changes to the way parking enforcement was to be carried out from the 31st March 2008 when Part 6 of the TMA 2004 came into force. Amongst other tasks, a key element of the Act was the introduction of dual band tariffs for Penalty Charge Notices for higher rate and lower rate contraventions. The Council had to decide which of the two following bandings it wished to adopt: - Band 1 - £60 for more serious contraventions and £40 for less serious (£30 or £20 discounted rate if paid within 14 days); or Band 2 - £70 or £50 (£35 or £25 discounted rate). He said there were significant financial implications for the Council and the budget pressure would be different depending on the level of tariff agreed. The current Penalty Charge was a flat rate of £60 (discounted to £30). All Councils across Kent would be affected similarly. Mr Burns also advised that the TMA required consultation to take place on matters of significance such as the level of charges, and it was important to consult as widely as possible. The report also contained a recommendation that further discussions take place with Kent County Council regarding details of new contraventions introduced by the Act and how these would be implemented, with Officers reporting back on this before the implementation date.

A Member considered the Board could not agree recommendation (i) in the report about which band of charges to adopt, before recommendation (ii) had taken place, i.e. the consultation exercise. If the Act had to be implemented by 31st March 2008 time appeared to be of the essence and he believed the consultation should take place via the local media rather than on a forum basis with invitees. Members agreed that the consultation should be commenced as soon as possible in order for the Board to be able to make a decision that could be in place by 31st March. A Member said that any consultation should be undertaken sensitively as motorists were already under the impression that they were subject to too many charges, regulations etc. The 14 day discounted rate should also be emphasised.

Another Member asked about references to bus lane enforcement by CCTV cameras and asked if this could be extended to bus gates in the context of Ashford. He considered there were still flagrant abuses of the bus gates in Ashford. Mr Corcoran explained that it was a stated goal of Kent Highway Services to enforce both bus lanes and bus gates with CCTV cameras, but there were legal issues to resolve. A team had been put in place at KCC to push this forward and a report on this issue would be forthcoming.

Recommended:

- That (i) **consultation on the tariffs for traffic and parking enforcement Penalty Charge Notices issued under the provisions of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act, as required by the Act, take place as soon as possible via the local media, in order for the Board to be able to make a decision that could be in place by 31st March 2008.**
- (ii) **further discussions be held with Kent County Council regarding details of new contraventions introduced by the Act and how these will be implemented. Officers to report back on these before the implementation date.**

372 ASHFORD RING ROAD – SCHEME UPDATE

Mr Watson introduced his information report which provided the Board with a construction update following on from similar reports to the Board over the last 18 months. The parts he particularly wanted to highlight as progressing within the Phase 1 Scheme were: - the two way system including the New Street/Somerset Road/Forge Lane junction, the North Street/Somerset Road junction, the Mace Lane/Somerset Road/Wellesley Road junction and Lower High Street and Memorial Gardens pedestrian crossings; Bank Street works; Elwick Road works; and the Victoria Road/Beaver Road alterations. Mr Watson also emphasised the consultation and communication talking place with all stakeholders. Due to the innovative nature of the shared space concept, it had been agreed that a comprehensive educational and publicity programme be taken forward over the coming months to inform all potential users of the scheme of the proposed changes, including local schools, access groups, cycling groups and local businesses.

A Member said he welcomed the provision of a staggered crossing between Lidl's and Farm Foods and asked if this could be considered in other places, such as North Street/Somerset Road, as waiting times for pedestrians were excessive. He was also pleased to note that despite his concerns, Godinton Road had not become a "rat run". With regard to further staggered crossings Mr Watson said that unfortunately these required a wider central reservation than was available at other parts of the ring road, so New Street was the only location where such a crossing could be provided without other significant alterations.

A Member mentioned the article in the local press about traders in Bank Street not having any festive lighting because of the works, and this had led to shoppers thinking the shops there were closed. She asked Officers if anything could be done to help the traders at this critical time. She had also been told by residents of Godinton Road that delivery vehicles to the Godinton Road estate could not access that estate due to the works and asked if this could be investigated. Mr Watson confirmed that investigations were underway to see what could be done in the short term to provide some lighting in Bank Street. He also informed that Godinton Road estate could still be accessed via Cotton Road, and it was important to make people aware of this as this would be the new permanent access.

Another Member said that it was unfortunate that so many people seemed to be judging the scheme before it had been completed. There was a need to wait until the whole scheme was in place. He wanted to thank Officers for the work that had been undertaken with access groups to alleviate some of the immediate problems, but he still had some concerns over what he called "uncertainty". Both pedestrians and vehicles were taking unnecessary risks by jumping lights because of uncertainty about the new systems. He also mentioned the quality of workmanship as the recent heavy rain had seen parts of the new system

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flooding. Mr Watson conceded there were still some snagging issues with Phase 1 and puddling was something that did need to be looked at. The educational programme referred to earlier also needed to include the use of the new puffin crossings.

Resolved:

That project progress be noted and the Board continue to support the Phase 1 scheme.

373 CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2007/08

Mr Jones updated Members on the proposed identified schemes that were intended for completion by Kent Highway Services, within the 2007/08 financial year.

A Member referred to the number of street lights that were out in Beaver Ward and asked for action on this as soon as possible. Mr Jones said that materials were on order and lanterns were awaited. It was expected that they would arrive in January when all outstanding recorded faults could be processed. Mr Corcoran said that at a recent presentation, the new Director covering KCC Highways had said he was keen to tackle this problem and it was a major priority for 2008/09.

With regard to East Hill, Mr Jones clarified that work was purely programmed for the footways at the moment, but if the carriageway needed looking at as well this could be done separately.

A Member asked about the cycleway continuation at Brookfield Road from Halstow Way to Noakes Meadow. Mr Corcoran said that the scheme was designed and ready to be implemented but the sticking point was obtaining a parcel of land from the Church. It had been a lengthy process but they were pushing the Church Committee for a decision.

Officers agreed to take points about Brookfield Road, the Beaver Road Bus Gate and the Highworth School to New Street cycleway away for further investigation.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

MINS: JTB Minutes 11.12.07