

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015

Present: **Councillor Burton (Chairman), and
Councillors Ash, Bird, Chittenden, Clark, Cooke,
Cuming, Daley, Fort, Hotson, Mrs Stockell, Vizzard,
Mrs Whittle, Willis and J.A. Wilson**

Also Present: **Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Ells, Mrs Grigg,
Mrs Joy, Mrs Ring, Round, Sargeant and
Thick**

123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from the following:

- Mr Paul Carter
- Councillor English
- Councillor T Sams

Councillor Willis had advised that he may arrive late to the meeting.

124. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Mrs Wilson for Councillor English
Councillor Grigg for Councillor Willis, until his arrival.

125. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

The following Visiting Members were noted:

- Councillors Ells and Sargeant were in attendance in support of a petition to be presented under item 7 of the agenda, and each reserved their rights to speak on any item on the agenda.
- Councillors Joy and Ring were in attendance in support of a petition to be presented under item 7 of the agenda.
- Councillors Round, Thick and Blackmore were in attendance and each reserved their rights to speak on any item on the agenda.
- Mr Mathew Balfour was in attendance as an observer.

126. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman, in his opinion, accepted the following as urgent items for the reasons specified below:

- The report of the Head of Planning and Development – Integrated Transport Strategy, to allow the Board to consider the item with time to make recommendations to upcoming Committees.
- The petition regarding Old Tovil Road, Hayle Road and Postley Road, as this was received with the required two week written notice but omitted from the original agenda due to administrative error.

For the following petitions the Chairman used his discretion and waived the requirement to provide two week written notice:

- The petition to Kent County Council to collaborate with Maidstone borough Council to provide and build a Leeds-Langley relief road
- The petition to express objection to Kent County Council's proposal to close the Cranbourne Avenue arm of the A229/A274 Wheatsheaf road junction to exiting road users.

127. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

128. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Board Members disclosed that they had been lobbied on:

- Item 7 – Two petitions regarding the proposed closure of Cranborne Avenue
- Item 10 – Draft Integrated Transport Strategy

Councillors Bird, Daley and Wilson disclosed that they had been lobbied on item 7 – petition regarding the Old Tovil Road junction with Postley and Hayle Road.

129. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

130. PETITIONS

Mr Donald Bates presented a petition objecting to the proposed closure of Cranborne Avenue. Mr Bates stated that the idea had been considered previously to increase traffic flow but had not been progressed at that

time. Closure of Cranborne Avenue would move air pollution elsewhere, such as to nearby Plains Avenue.

The Chairman changed the order in which the petitions would be presented, in order that both those relating to the proposed closure of Cranborne Avenue could be heard together.

Councillor Brian Clarke presented a petition objecting to the proposed closure of Cranborne Avenue to exiting traffic. Councillor Clarke explained that he had also received 72 letters of objection from residents, and three in favour of the proposed closure.

Mr Dinesh Khadka presented a petition requesting the installation of a pedestrian crossing at the Old Tovil Road junction with Postley and Hayle Road. Mr Khadka described how children at the Little Stars Playschool, Southborough Primary School and Maidstone Grammar School have need to cross at the junction. There was a large number of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists using this junction, and it was especially difficult for those who were transporting small children in buggies.

Councillor Gill Fort presented a petition on behalf of Leeds Parish Council requesting collaboration between Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to build a Leeds-Langley relief road. Councillor Fort referred to the modelling conducted by AMEY which depicted a severe effect on journey times arising from future development, and stated that the B2163 would grind to a halt without the relief road.

131. QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr Edward Garret asked the following question to the Chairman:

Can the junction between Cranborne Avenue and Sutton Road remain open for cyclists please?

I read about the proposed closure of the junction between Cranborne Avenue and Sutton Road in the Downs Mail December 2015?

There is only one route that cyclists can cycle from the Loose area into central Maidstone and avoid the major roads. The only route that keeps cyclists and cars apart is to cycle down Pheasant Lane, cross the traffic lights at the Wheatsheaf junction (on foot) then carry on down Cranborne Avenue. This route nicely links up with Marion Crescent which is on the well signposted Shepway to Town Centre cycle route. This keeps cyclists off both the busy Loose Road and the equally busy Sutton Road.

I can understand the reasons for closing the junction to cars as there are often queues of stationary cars pumping out exhaust fumes at this junction. However if the junction was also closed to cyclists then those of us who commute by bicycle between the Loose area and central Maidstone would have to join the four lane Loose Road at this point, instead of cycling on quieter roads which link up directly with

the designated cycle route. I have been commuting by bicycle along Cranborne Avenue from the Wheatsheaf Junction since 2007 without incident, and I would like this route to stay open please. Otherwise I (and I am sure other cyclists) would have to drive to work into central Maidstone to avoid cycling along the Loose Road, and the last thing we all need is more cars on the roads.

Can I have your assurance that there are no plans to stop cyclists using this junction please?

Mr Garret had advised that he would be unable to attend the meeting. In his absence the Chairman gave a verbal reply, to be sent to Mr Garrett as a written reply, as follows:

The full details of the scheme for the Wheatsheaf junction and possible closure of egress Cranbourne Avenue has still to be finalised. The request for access for cyclists has been noted and will be considered in the design.

Mr Carlo Attubato asked the following question to the Chairman:

Before I start I would like to state that KCC have not presented or provided the information on the gyratory scheme clearly to residents. After contacting KCC to find this information I had to contact a Kent County Councillor directly in order to view a plan of the scheme.

I would like to ask the Board to consider the following proposal, as published previously in the November 2015 issue of the Downsmail:

The current bridge is not the problem. The problem is there is no way out to the North A229 or the south, the reason being that the traffic lights will remain in place.

My proposal is to:

- Remove traffic lights from the A229 at the White Rabbit roundabout to speed traffic towards Blue Bell Hill and Boxley.
- Create a footbridge near the pub and a one-way system that would allow Boxley-bound traffic to travel up Hardy Street and John Street, freeing up the bottom end of Boxley Road which would be one-way for those travelling towards Maidstone.
- Ease traffic to the south by removing traffic lights on Palace Avenue, replacing it with a footbridge. Providing a right turn into Old Tovil Road, with traffic lights at Hayle Road, would keep traffic moving.

The work could be done in stages, avoiding the minimum four months of delays it is predicted the gyratory work will cause next year.

Would the Board support my proposal?

The Chairman replied that:

We thank Mr Attubato for his comments. Consideration has been given to the proposals.

However, the routes being proposed are not suitable for the suggested traffic volumes. Construction of footbridges would require significant land acquisition and would therefore not be a cost effective solution. All highway users must be considered when designing a new scheme and the removal of traffic signals and pedestrian crossing facilities does not satisfy this requirement.

Information regarding the Bridges Gyratory can be found on Kent.gov.uk with updates circulated through the local media accordingly.

Mr David Cane addressed a statement to the Board regarding the proposed closure of Cranborne Avenue to exiting traffic. Mr Cane stated that this measure would cause an increase of traffic using minor undesignated residential roads. Traffic in north Shepway would either be pushed onto Armstrong Road and Postley Road, past Southborough School and via a 20 MPH restricted route, or would join the circulatory system in the town centre via Mote Road. Air pollution would not be resolved but relocated to another area.

Mr David Bates asked the following question to the Chairman:

Some of the key issues identified in the Integrated Transport Plan are admitted to be; increasing traffic congestion, poor air quality and parts of the road network operates at or near capacity, especially to the South of the Borough. With a proposal in the Local Plan for 18,560 new homes, does the Committee agree with the 453 petitioners I presented earlier this evening, that the Integrated Transportation Plan for Cranborne Avenue is a desperately ill-conceived idea which is merely tinkering at the edge of the Wheatsheaf Junction problem and that all reference to Cranborne Avenue in that plan should be deleted?

The Chairman replied that:

Your comments have been noted.

132. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE RESULTS OF VISUM MODELLING ON DS4

Notice was given of a motion. The Chairman invited Officers to introduce the report before the motion was put forward.

The Head of Planning and Development, Rob Jarman, advised that the information before the Board detailed further results of the traffic modelling on the Do Something 4 (DS4) option. This had been developed jointly with Kent County Council. Focus had been given to transport

mitigation measures to support development, and the phasing of new development.

Brendan Wright, Strategic Transport and Development Planner, explained that the DS4 option was based upon the objectively assessed housing need calculated as 18,560 homes, and modelled interventions including walking, cycling, public transport and car parking. Two runs of the modelling had been completed: one with, and one without the inclusion of the proposed Leeds-Langley relief road. Work on rural junctions would be looked at as planning applications were submitted.

It was moved by Mr Cooke, and seconded by Councillor JA Wilson, that:

In the absence of an agreed transport strategy, and in the light of the evidence presented to this board demonstrating Maidstone's significant highway capacity constraints, this board recommends that a transport strategy be taken forward by the borough and county councils, covering the period up to the local plan review in 2022. The aim of this strategy will be to mitigate the transport impact of future additional dwellings within this time frame, estimated to be in the region of some 5000 homes. The strategy should comprise of the key highways schemes and public transport improvements, agreed by the board, and further traffic modelling will be required to identify its impact. Full details should also be urgently provided to further develop the justification for a relief road between the A20 and the A274 the Leeds Langley relief road, along with the preferred route, in order to allow testing against other strategic transport options, and to enable the scheme to be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Chairman allowed for further discussion of the results of VISUM modelling on DS4 before the motion was voted on.

In response to questions the Board was advised that:

- Maidstone Borough Council could allocate housing sites and grant planning permission, but only the land owners and developers could decide when development would commence and set the pace of development.
- Consultant engineers had produced modelling and analysis on the rural junctions at Staplehurst and Linton cross roads, and arrived at detailed mitigation measures. Applications securing section 106 monies from developers would fund these improvements.

Members discussed the motion put before the Board and the following points were made:

- Members reported a desire among residents for the implementation of the proposed Leeds-Langley relief road.

- Consensus was required between the Board, the KCC Cabinet Member and the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee.
- There had been discussions regarding a Leeds-Langley relief road in previous years, which had stalled due to lack of funding.
- There were concerns that building the relief road would inspire more housing development in the area.
- Currently available funding could be used to implement schemes before section 106 monies became available.
- Aside from LEP funding and applying for European funding, Councillors could lobby Members of Parliament to identify funds for schemes.

An amended motion, taking into account the views of the Board, was put to Members for agreement.

It was moved by Mr Cooke, seconded by Councillor JA Wilson, and

RESOLVED that:

We agree in the absence of an agreed transport strategy and in light of the evidence presented to this Board demonstrating Maidstone's significant highway capacity constraints, this Board recommends that a transport strategy be taken forward urgently by the Borough and County Councils covering the period of the Local Plan, with a further review completed in 2022.

The aim of this strategy will be to mitigate the transport impact of future growth, in the first instance up to 2022. The strategy should comprise of the key highway schemes and public transport improvements agreed by the Board, and further traffic modelling will be required to identify its impact. It is proposed that the £8.9 million growth fund monies identified for transport be used to accelerate the delivery of these improvements. Existing developer contributions may then be used to support further measures.

The agreed transport strategy should also develop the justification for a relief road between the A20 to the A274 (the Leeds and Langley Relief Road), along with a preferred route, in order to allow testing with other strategic transport options and identify all source of potential funding to enable the schemes to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Voting:

For: 15 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

Paul Spooner, Director of Regeneration and Communities, advised Members that the motion of the Board would not be reflected in the

already published agenda for Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee to be held on 14 December 2015.

133. DRAFT INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Board considered the journey of the draft Integrated Transport Strategy, and noted that it would be considered at the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee on 13 January 2015 with final amendments. It was put forward that a meeting of the Board be held in early January to consider the Integrated Transport Strategy and further completed modelling, allowing time to make recommendations to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee if required.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy be deferred, with a refreshed version to come to a meeting of the Board in early January.

134. DURATION OF MEETING

5.02 p.m. to 7.27 p.m.