

**To:** Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

**By:** Tim Read, Head of Transportation

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Subject:** Old Oakwood Hospital Housing Site

**Classification:** For decision

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**Summary:** Following the recent submission of a petition signed by approximately 350 local residents requesting the proposal to route buses through the Old Oakwood Hospital Housing Site be stopped the Board is asked to decide whether it continues to support the use of developer funding for this proposal and whether the Board wishes to recommend to the County Councils Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that the proposal for the bus link through the development be officially abandoned.

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## **Background**

1. As previously reported to this board a sum of £200,000, minus the cost of any other agreed highway works, was negotiated from the housing development on the Old Hospital site between Hermitage Lane & Queens Road. This money is intended for improvements to public transport which are reasonably required as a result of the Oakwood Development and its expenditure requires the approval of this Board.
2. The money was to be paid in two parts with the first being £100,000 index linked paid before occupation of the 40th unit and the balance upon the provision of a bus-only link between Hermitage Lane in the west and Queens Road in the east through the site.
3. The first £100,000 has been received by Kent County Council (KCC) from the Borough Council and at the April 2011 meeting of this Board it was resolved for this money to be used to implement the bus only link by a rising bollard.

## **Bus Only Link**

4. Since that meeting KCC's traffic consultants Jacobs have been working on the detailed design and costing of the bus gate. The current estimated cost for the provision of a rising bollard bus gate on the development is between £47.3k and £63k. The final cost would be dependent on agreeing the final supplier of the rising bollard, street lighting requirements, power and telecommunications connections. Approximately £10k of the £100k has to date been spent on design fees.

## **Petition**

5. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 a 21 page petition containing approximately 350 signatures was received requesting the Council stop [the proposal of] re-routing of bus services through Tarragon Road on safety grounds. The petition sets out that Tarragon Road is in a quiet residential area which would struggle to accommodate the volume of bus traffic proposed on environmental, safety, noise and access grounds.
6. If the proposal was to continue a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would be required to implement the bus gate which would need a full statutory public consultation. It can be reasonably assumed following the submission of the petition that the result of the public consultation would be the majority of local residents objecting to the TRO. These objections would need to be reported back to this board to be resolved. If the proposal continued to a full public consultation the cost of consultation would need to be funded from the S106 developer funding.

## **The need for a Bus Only Link**

7. The proposed bus gate will allow buses to access Maidstone hospital from the town centre without passing through the Fountain junction, which suffers heavily from congestion and adversely affects the punctuality and reliability of bus services. The bus gate would deliver both real and perceived benefit to bus services, reducing journey times as well as increasing punctuality and reliability, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the bus service over the private car.
8. Arriva and KCC have recently introduced enhancements to the service 6, which operates between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, via the new Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury. The service 6 has the potential to provide a important link between the two hospitals, which has become increasingly important as service have been moved from Maidstone Hospital to Pembury.
9. However, in order for this link to be established, it is critical that service 6 can access the hospital without using the Fountain junction twice, as congestion here causes significant delays to journey times, and would make the half hourly frequency on the service 6 unachievable. Arriva has made it clear that the service 6 is unable to serve Maidstone hospital if the bus gate is not introduced. The service 78 would also benefit significantly from using the link, providing faster and more reliable services between the Maidstone hospital and the town centre.

## **Decision**

10. Members or asked to consider the strategic reasons for the provision of the bus gate and implications of not proceeding against the local opposition shown in the submitted petition. As stated in the legal agreement for the Section 106 developer funding the JTB need to approve the expenditure of this funding. Therefore, the JTB need to confirm whether it continues to support the funding being used for the bus gate or whether it should now be used for other public transport improvements in the area.

11. As a result of the strong local opposition to the bus gate the JTB is also asked whether it wishes to make a recommendation to the County Councils Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that the proposal for the bus link through the development be officially abandoned.

12. Members are asked to decide :-

- a. Whether the Joint Transportation Board still approves the use of the S106 funding for the provision of the Bus Gate
  - b. Whether the Joint Transportation Board wishes to recommend to the County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that the proposal for the bus link through the development be officially abandoned.
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<p><b>Background documents:</b> Previous JTB report 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011 &amp; August 2005 and submitted petition.</p>
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