

**Text of covering letter to Members of Area Planning
Committee 1**

Dear Councillor

Tonbridge Town Centre – Guard Rail Assessment

When it met in February, the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board considered a report on the County Council's proposals to remove certain lengths of pedestrian guard rail in Tonbridge.

The Board acknowledged that this was a complex matter and concluded that fresh consultation with local Members was essential to reach an informed judgement so that a formal Borough position could be adopted and shared with the County Council.

Under cover of this letter, I am seeking your views on the proposals contained in the report prepared by the County Council's consultant, Jacobs. I am attaching a questionnaire and inviting you to indicate your thoughts on the Jacobs proposals for each of the sites.

By way of context, I am also attaching a copy of the report that was presented to the PTAB in February and this contains a copy of the Jacobs document at Annex 3.

I am also attaching a copy of an interesting letter that the then Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation received from a local resident, Robert Huxford, who also happens to be a nationally respected transportation engineer. He is happy that I share his comments with local Members as it will help illustrate that this is a far more complex issue than it first appears to be.

I intend to compile a site by site picture of local Members' views of the proposals and report this to the PTAB meeting on 27 July. This means that time for reply, by 11 July, is shorter than I would normally have wished. However, I hope this does not prove to be a barrier to you letting me have your thoughts. If you have any queries on this consultation, do please contact me.

Dear Councillor Balfour

I am writing to you, in your capacity as Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation, about the guardrail removal issue in Tonbridge. I would like to offer you the following notes, which I hope will help.

I am a co-author of the UK Guide on Highway Risk and Liability Claims, as well as a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers Municipal Expert Panel.

- Pedestrian guardrails are intended and designed to keep pedestrians on the footway and out of the carriageway. Unfortunately there is a common misunderstanding that they are there to stop vehicles from running onto the footway. This they are not designed to do. (Contrary to the statements made in the Tonbridge Chronicle)
- Where there it is thought necessary to protect pedestrians from vehicles running out of control onto footways then properly engineered vehicle barriers, or engineered bollards can be considered. Some 8 per cent of pedestrian fatalities occur while the pedestrian is on the footway.
- The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 02/09 Guardrails states..... "there is no conclusive evidence that the inclusion of pedestrian guardrailing at any type of pedestrian crossing or junction has any statistically significant effect on the safety record" 3.4.5
- It is believed that guardrails lead to drivers driving faster and taking less regard of pedestrians.
- Guardrails offer no benefit to cyclists, and may lead to cyclists becoming trapped between left turning vehicles and the guardrails
- Some pedestrians choose to climb over guardrails or walk in the road, if forced too far from their preferred route.
- Whether guardrail systems offer a safety benefit depends also on signal controlled crossings being safer than informal crossing of the street
- A number of different organisations have developed their own guardrail assessment systems – including Transport for London, and Urban Initiatives based on the DfT and other research.
- Many local authorities now have guardrail assessment and removal programmes – not just Kensington and Chelsea. The Strand, for example, pre-dates Kensington High Street by a decade, and

- The removal of guardrails has often gone hand in hand with the reconfiguring of pedestrian crossings, and road junctions, to improve convenience for pedestrians.
- KCC as Highway Authority have a duty under the Traffic Management Act to seek the expeditious movement of traffic, traffic under the Act, includes pedestrians.

The current state of play on best practice would appear to be represented by documents including:

- The Department for Transport
 - § “Manual for Streets & Manual for Streets II (CIHT)
 - § Local Transport Note 01/08 – Traffic Management and Streetscape
 - § Local Transport Note 02/09 Guardrails
- In general contemporary best practice advocates a combination of measures including:
 - § reducing the primary source of danger by reducing peak speed of traffic (which can be by reconfiguring the carriageway and the street environment, or by introducing 20mph limits (such as Plymouth)
 - § narrower carriageways and widened footways
 - § creating an environment that looks more like a place and less like a trunk road to encourage people to drive more slowly and with greater consideration for other road users.
 - § eliminating clutter, lines, signage, and by virtue of LTN 02/09 guardrails.
 - § Improving the general quality of streets such as by landscaping, appropriate tree planting etc.

Highway authorities are under a common law duty, when exercising their powers, to have regard to the needs negligent road users.

Tonbridge has been badly damaged by many decades of traffic, stemming from a time when it was on an “A” road. It carries a legacy of out of date trunk road style highways practice, including a section of super-elevated carriageway which I suspect dates from the 1930s. There are some particularly poor quality roundabouts that blight the centre of the town, such as the area around the library. The station forecourt area is particularly poor both in the facilities it provides to pedestrians, and the image it presents for Tonbridge. The Quarry Hill area is basically a dual carriageway rather than part of a town, and given the respective weight of traffic, the footways seem inadequate in width, whereas the road width seems excessive and likely to encourage higher speeds in an area where there is the greatest concentration of vulnerable pedestrians. And yet Tonbridge has great potential for enhancement.

I hope that these notes are of some use. I am sorry they are at some length, but it is obviously an important issue both to the economic wellbeing of the

town, as well as the safety of the public. And the issue has obviously become somewhat emotive. I would suggest that the Councillors acquaint themselves with the content of the Department for Transport's Local Transport Note LTN 02/09 on Guardrails, before coming to a decision.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Robert Huxford

KENT PEDESTRIAN GUARD RAIL ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Consultation with Members of Area Planning Committee 1

Earlier this year, the County Council consulted the Borough Council on an assessment it had commissioned Jacobs to carry out on pedestrian guard rail in Tonbridge. This was considered by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board (PTAB) at its meeting on 22 February 2011. It recommended as follows:

“That the proposals set out by Kent County Council be reviewed in consultation with local Members and the revised response referred to the Advisory Board before final submission”.

The questionnaire below forms part of the consultation requested by the PTAB and I am seeking your views, site by site, on the proposals in the Jacobs assessment report.

I will compile the responses from all APC1 Members and report these as requested to the PTAB. The next scheduled meeting is on 27 July with a report deadline of 15 July. **Please return your completed form to me by the end of Monday 11 July.**

Mike McCulloch
Chief Engineer

Councillor

Site	Location	Jacobs Report Recommendation	Response recommended to the PTAB 22 February 2011	APC1 Member response to the Jacobs recommendation?		Comments & Observations
				Yes	No	
1	Vale Road/Angel Lane junction	<p>Remove all the guardrailing except the length in front of 'Poundstretcher'</p> <p>The length to be retained separates the lower area of footway from the higher level carriageway. Retaining guard rail at this location is possibly justified but what is there at the moment is of poor quality and should be replaced using some of the better looking guard rail to be removed elsewhere in the High Street.</p>	Support for the Jacobs proposals			
2	Waterloo Rd/Quarryhill Road/Priory Road	Remove the four stretches of guard rail round this junction.	This is a straight road with good visibility and the guard railing currently installed is difficult to justify			

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			particularly as there is a risk of people walking within the carriageway on the outside of the fencing. Therefore I recommend the Borough Council supports this proposal.			
3	Quarry Hill Road/Pembury Road junction	Retain the two substantial lengths of guard rail at this junction.	In any future remodelling of this junction, to create a better 'gateway' into the town, removal of guard-railing will undoubtedly feature as part of the scheme aims. For the moment, the layout is thoroughly dominated by the needs of vehicular traffic and there is precious little concession to the needs of pedestrians or the streetscene. It is difficult to make any justification for the complete length of railing on the southern side of this junction and I recommend the KHS be requested to remove this. Also, I consider there is scope for at least reducing the extensive length of guard rail on the northern side of the junction by six panels within Pembury Road.			

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4	Quarry Hill Road – crossing to the south of the Pembury Road junction	Remove the guard rail at the crossing.	The guardrailing adds little, if anything, to road safety and it is a legacy of previous design standards that obliged such lengths of railing to be installed as a matter of course. I recommend the Borough Council supports the removal as proposed.			
5	Quarry Hill Road/Waterloo Road/George Street	Remove the length of guard rail between Brook Street and Waterloo Road and also at the George Street corner. The length of guard rail along the centre of the carriageway is recommended for retention.	The proposal to remove the guard rail between Brook St and Waterloo Road has attracted particular comment and this has been prompted by concerns about the need to provide a degree of containment for the considerable numbers of students and pupils from the college and schools along Brook Street. Perhaps a short length could be justified at the Brook Street corner where the footway is narrow but further along the footway widens out and there is no case to be made for retaining the full length that is currently installed.			

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				Yes	No	
			<p>In any event, there is a clear desire within the Borough Council's adopted document for the Quarry Hill Conservation Area for a reduction in the amount of guard railing. Consequently, it is recommended that the County Council be requested to reconsider the guardrailing along the centre of the road and that this be removed if at all possible (page 17 of the Conservation Area Appraisal).</p> <p>The proposal to remove the guardrailing at the corner of George Street is recommended for support.</p>			
6	Quarry Hill Road adjacent to Quarry Hill Parade	Remove this stretch of guardrailing.	<p>It has little, if any, utility as a guide for pedestrians. It can even lead to people being marooned on the carriageway side of it as they perhaps misguidedly try to cross from the other side of the road and it is safer on balance to remove it completely. Consequently, this proposal is recommended for support.</p>			

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				Yes	No	
7	Waterloo Road/Tonbridge Station	Remove a short length of guardrailing in Waterloo Road and retain the length on front of the station	Recent work on the taxi ranks in Waterloo Road is still settling down and it is premature to be considering altering any of the arrangements in this location. Therefore, I recommend that Site 7 be left unaltered.			
8	Barden Road/Station Approach junction	Remove the short length of railing at this junction.	The footway is wide at this point and guard railing has little justification. Therefore I recommend that the Borough supports the removal.			
9, 10, 11	High Street	Remove the guard rail associated with the three pelican crossings in the lower High Street.	The Borough Council installed all of these lengths of guard rail in the early nineties as part of an environmental enhancement and traffic management scheme in the lower High Street. The then current design standards frustrated the preferred option of installing the crossings without the guard railing. Given the less prescriptive design approach that now prevails, I recommend the Borough Council should support this proposal to			

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			remove these lengths of guard railing.			
12	Tonbridge Road, Hildenborough near Coldharbour Lane	Remove the guardrailing associated with the road crossing.	This guard rail has no readily discernible benefit but, more critically, it obscures the sight line to drivers turning right out of the Medical Centre. Consequently, I recommend that the Borough Council supports this proposal.			

Tonbridge Society contributed comments on the Jacobs assessment document and suggested two further sites that it considered merited inclusion in this exercise. I would welcome your views on these locations.

				Retain	Remove	
	The corner of Dry Hill Road where it meets the London Road.					
	The junction of Shipbourne Rd/Dry Hill Park Road and Yardley Park Road					