
A26 Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells Cycle Route

To: Tonbridge Joint Transportation Board, 13th March 2017

By: Tim Read – Head of Transportation, KCC

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

The A26 between Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells town centres is a priority utility cycling route. The route benefits from some segregated infrastructure for cyclists at present but this requires further improvement to provide a higher quality route and encourage more cycling.

The proposed designs for the route were published for a six week consultation beginning on 7 November 2016. Following the consultation it is now recommended that the JTB agrees to support the scheme being taken forward to statutory consultation for the Traffic Regulation Orders.

1. Introduction

The Department for Transport (DfT) added £100m to the Local Growth Fund (LGF) pot in order to fund Local Sustainable Transport Fund Style schemes to:

- improve access to employment and services
- reduce the need to travel by the private car
- enhance pedestrian, cycle and public transport facilities
- improve sustainable transport connections

KCC secured funding from this allocation and the A26 Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells Cycle Route has been designed as part of this programme. It is anticipated that the construction budget will come from an underspend on the recent signalisation scheme at Yew Tree Road/Speldhurst Road on the A26 and a business case will be submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board following agreement of the JTB to progress the scheme.

The route has been designed and the consultation took place between 7 November and 18 December 2016. The consultation covered the whole proposed route between Brook Street in Tonbridge and Grosvenor Road in Tunbridge Wells.

2. The Design

The proposed route consists of both off-road and on-road sections and includes:

- Where width is available existing advisory cycle lanes are widened to provide mandatory lanes (minimum 1.5m wide).

- Revised geometry at some side junctions, most of which include raised tables that provide an enhanced flush crossing arrangement for pedestrians. Raised tables also help to reduce the speed of vehicular turning movements.
- Inclusion of two bus stop bypass features north of the junctions with Culverden Park and Pennington Road (Southborough).
- Removal of two short sections of on street parking on the western side of the A26 between Southfield Road and Beltring Road, and between Still Lane and Holden Road.
- Introduction of 20mph limit on the A26 between the junctions of Pennington Road and Holden Park Road (opportunities for introducing pilot 20mph areas within the Borough are being explored separately).
- Removal of southbound bus lane between the Hand and Sceptre and junction at Yew Tree Road to allow for cycle lanes to be introduced in both directions.
- Improvement of segregated provision at Mabledon to include the extension of shared use pedestrian and cycle paths both north and southbound.
- A new off-road shared use pedestrian and cyclist link on Quarry Hill.

Plans showing the proposed route can be seen in Appendix 1 and the Tonbridge and Malling section of the route is on Plan 5.

3. Consultation

The consultation ran between 7 November and 18 December 2016 and the programme included a number of elements as follows:

- Publication of the route proposals on the Kent County Council Consultation Portal along with a questionnaire for feedback.
- Two drop-in evenings held at Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys on 14 and 28 November between 5pm and 8pm. These events were well attended with approximately 40 people visiting on 14 November and over 50 people on 28 November.
- Promotion of the consultation via social media.
- Leaflet drop to all properties (residential and business) along the A26 between Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells town centres – with details of the events and the on-line questionnaire.
- Signs on lamp columns along the A26 to inform about the consultation.
- Direct mail-out to relevant bus companies and discussions with Arriva at the Quality Bus Partnership meeting (2 December).
- Direct mail-out to local schools.
- Direct email to relevant contacts that have expressed an interest in the project.

The feedback

1. A total of 212 people/organisations responded to the consultation via the on-line or paper questionnaire. Of these 82% were local residents. Overall the majority of people that responded via the questionnaire either strongly agree or

agree with the proposed route designs at 67%. This compares with 24% of respondents that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals and 9% that neither agreed nor disagreed.

2. Of the 212 responses received, 32 originated from residents or organisations within the Borough of Tonbridge and Malling. Of these 32 responses, 72% either strongly agree or agree with the proposals. This compares with 22% that either disagree or strongly disagree and 6% that neither agree or disagree.
3. One response was received outside of the consultation period (7 January 2017) which affects the Tonbridge and Malling section of the proposed route. The response was supportive of the proposals but raised safety concerns regarding the entrance to Enterprise on Quarry Hill Road. The respondent was concerned that increased levels of cyclists using the shared use cycle path could result in conflict with vehicles accessing Enterprise.

These concerns will be considered and discussed with the respondent prior to the proposed route being implemented.

4. There is a substantial level of support for the scheme amongst the respondents, but the consultation also raised a number of issues/concerns. Though these concerns relate on the whole to the Tunbridge Wells section of the route, they are set out in the table below with a response to each:

Issue	Response
The proposals will create more congestion on the route	The intention of the scheme is to encourage more cycling and reduce the overall number of car journeys on the A26. The proposals do not significantly reduce junction or link capacity and will therefore have a negligible impact on motorists journey times.
Concern about removal of bus lane on Southborough	This concern is understood. However, removal of the bus lane is required to provide a cycle lane northbound on this uphill part of the route (where cyclists are vulnerable). This is a very short stretch of bus lane and therefore has a limited impact on the overall journey times for buses along the A26. It is not the intention to remove other longer stretches of bus lane that provide greater benefits to buses.

<p>Concern about 20mph restriction in Southborough</p>	<p>There is no opportunity to provide cycle lanes through Southborough due to the width of the carriageway; therefore a speed reduction scheme is proposed to provide safer conditions for cyclists.</p>
<p>Lack of physical segregation for additional safety</p>	<p>This has been considered carefully but it is not possible to provide physical segregation on the route. This is due to the width and character of the road but would also add significantly to the cost of the scheme.</p>
<p>No infrastructure provided between the Hand & Sceptre and Mabledon</p>	<p>This has been considered carefully. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity to provide cycle lanes on this stretch of the A26 due to the width of the road. A scheme to widen the road or provide a shared pedestrian/cycle route on the eastern side of the road would be cost prohibitive at present due to the significant change in levels and the proximity of private property boundaries. This does not mean that this could not be re-visited in the future if significant funding became available.</p>
<p>Removal of parking bays between Beltring Road and Southfields Road in St Johns</p>	<p>Concern about this aspect of the proposal is understood. However, removal of these bays is required to provide a continuous lane along this section of the route. The presence of on-street residents parking is unusual and not appropriate on a strategic route such as the A26.</p>

A statutory consultation process is required to progress the Traffic Regulation Orders for the 20mph speed limit, parking and bus lane alterations.

4. Recommendation required:

That the Joint Transportation Board supports the progression of the A26 cycle route proposals to statutory consultation for the Traffic Regulation Orders.

Future Meeting if applicable:	A progress report will be submitted to the next JTB meeting
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