

A20 London Road, East Malling, Larkfield and Ditton Highway Improvements Scheme

Consultation Report



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Public Consultation 8th July – 1st September 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

From 8th July – 1st September 2019, Kent County Council consulted on proposals for highway improvements on the A20 London Road, East Malling, Larkfield and Ditton. The proposals included improving the cycle links along the A20 London Road between the junctions of New Hythe Lane and Station Road, reducing congestion at these two junctions by increasing the number of straight ahead lanes to two each way, upgrading all of the existing islands and installing a new island in the vicinity of the old Suzuki garage.

Currently, there is no off-road cycle path provision and no continuous carriageway (on the road) cycle lane along the A20 between its junctions with New Hythe Lane and Station Road. This scheme proposes to improve the links for cyclists by providing a new widened shared cycleway/footway on both sides of the road for the majority of the route, although some sections will still require cyclists to use carriageway cycle lanes. New tactile paving will also be provided at all pedestrian crossing points, therefore, making journeys easier for both pedestrians and cyclists.

It is proposed to widen the existing islands along this stretch of the A20 to allow for the full width of bicycles, making crossing safer and more convenient for cyclists and pedestrians. A new island in the vicinity of the old Suzuki garage is also being proposed, providing an extra crossing point. As the garage site is currently under development the exact location of this island is still to be determined.

The proposed scheme will also look to reduce congestion along this busy stretch of the A20 London Road by increasing the number of straight-ahead lanes at the New Hythe Lane junction and the Station Road/New Road junction to two each way. This improvement is designed to cut down on the queuing times at these junctions, therefore, improving journey times for motorists.

It is anticipated that the works will be completed in two phases. The first phase would consist of the installation of the shared footway/cycleway and the improvements to the A20/New Hythe Lane junction. Phase two would consist of the improvements to the A20/Station Road/New Road junction.

KCC's project team, have developed the improvements in consultation with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the local members and parish councils. This consultation was carried out at the outline design stage to provide local residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed scheme.

1.2. Purpose of the Consultation

The purpose of the public consultation was to inform the public and stakeholder organisations about the proposed design in order to provide them with the opportunity to 'Have their say' and to help KCC gain feedback to inform changes or improvements to the scheme. The consultation gave the opportunity to:

- Understand why changes are being proposed to the A20 London Road at East Malling, Larkfield and Ditton.
- Consider the possible impacts and benefits of the proposed scheme.
- Ask questions and share views on the proposals.

This public consultation offered the opportunity to open a dialogue with stakeholder organisations and the public so their comments and concerns could be incorporated into this report and the on-going work to finalise the scheme.

1.3. Purpose of this Report

This report presents the analysis and findings of the responses to the public consultation on the proposals. In addition, the report summarises the consultation process and the engagement and promotional activities that took place. The report also states how the feedback will be used to progress the proposal and identifies the next steps in the project development process.

2. Consultation Process

This chapter outlines the process followed to deliver the consultation and details the activities and documentation developed to support the delivery of the consultation. The consultation was divided into five stages. Detailed information on each section is given below.

Undertake Equality Impact Assessment (see Chapter 3)	Develop consultation process & promotional activities	Pre-consultation activity/ engagement	During consultation activity	Post consultation activity
Identify possible impacts on protected characteristic groups	Identify stakeholders	Information item to Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board	Postcards delivered to businesses and residents in and around East Malling, Larkfield and Ditton.	Analysis and reporting of consultation responses
	Define consultation activities	Meeting with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, local Members and Parish Councils	Posters up on lamp posts and A-boards erected on A20.	Feedback to consultees and stakeholders
	Define communication activities and frequencies		Identified stakeholders and groups consulted	
			Public consultation drop-in events	
			Information displayed in Larkfield Library	
			Online and hard copy questionnaire	
			Responding to queries received	

2.1. Promoting the Consultation

The consultation process was developed by KCC with the aim of involving residents, community groups and interested parties throughout the project to help develop the proposals, drawing on local knowledge and expertise.

Promoting the Consultation

The following promotional activities were undertaken to support the delivery of the public consultation:

- Consultation poster displayed on lamp posts along the route and on parish noticeboards in Larkfield
- A-boards placed on the roadside to catch passing motorists
- Inclusion on Kent County Council's Facebook Page
- Postcards distributed to residents and businesses in East Malling, Larkfield and Ditton
- Press release issued to local media outlets (08/07/2019)
- Page on KCC's Consultation Directory on www.kent.gov.uk
- Delivered Consultation booklets and questionnaires to Brookfield Junior School and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Offices
- Consultation posters, booklets and questionnaires left on deposit at Larkfield Library
- Two exhibition events held at Larkfield Village Hall



www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements
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Please note: materials are available for reference at www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements

The consultation poster

2.2. During Consultation Activities

A number of activities were undertaken during the consultation period.

Consultation Events

Two drop-in sessions were held (16 July and 24 July) at Larkfield Village Hall. These were timed to be inclusive to commuters and those in work and were held on Tuesday 12pm – 3pm and Wednesday 5pm – 8pm. The purpose of the events was to provide attendees with a forum to discuss the proposals with KCC officers and ask any questions.

The consultation drop-in sessions included details of the proposed plans alongside hard copies of the consultation document, questionnaire and postcard.

In excess of 50 people attended these drop-in sessions.

Consultation material

Hard copies of the consultation material were available at Larkfield Library throughout the consultation period. Copies could also be downloaded from the consultation webpage www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements or delivered on request.

- ✓ In total, the Consultation Booklet was downloaded 1068 times.
- ✓ The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was downloaded 93 times.
- ✓ The Consultation Questionnaire Word version was downloaded 259 times.
- ✓ The poster was downloaded 202 times.
- ✓ The Postcard was downloaded 147 times.

Feedback mechanism

People were asked to provide feedback via a consultation questionnaire, which was available online and in a paper version. The paper version was available at the exhibition events, from Larkfield Library and on request via telephone or email.

3. Equality and Accessibility

3.1. Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The EqIA provides a process to help us to understand how the proposals may affect people based on their protected characteristics (age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion/belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carer's responsibilities).

An EqIA was completed prior to commencement of the consultation and was available as one of the consultation documents during the consultation at www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements. This document was downloaded 93 times.

We will use the feedback gathered from the consultation to update the EqIA before the outline design is finalised.

The following steps were defined in the Action Plan and additions were made as the project developed. All were taken to ensure the consultation was accessible to all:

- In addition to the consultation being available online, two events were held to provide the opportunity for people to view the material and ask the design team questions. Hard copies of the online questionnaire were available and staff on hand to provide support. This was particularly important to ensure the consultation was accessible to people who could not or did not want to access the consultation online. The events were held at an accessible venue. The consultation event information was made available online kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements for anyone who was unable to attend the events.
- Hard copies of the Consultation Booklet and Questionnaire were available at Larkfield Library throughout the consultation period.
- All publicity material included a phone number and email address for people to request hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material. Word versions of the EqIA and questionnaire were provided to ensure accessibility of documentation to consultees using audio transcription software.

Equality analysis of the consultation data was undertaken (Chapter 5) to identify any new issues that would impact a protected characteristic group. The EqIA will be updated to consider outcomes of this consultation and will be available online at www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements.

4. Response Profile

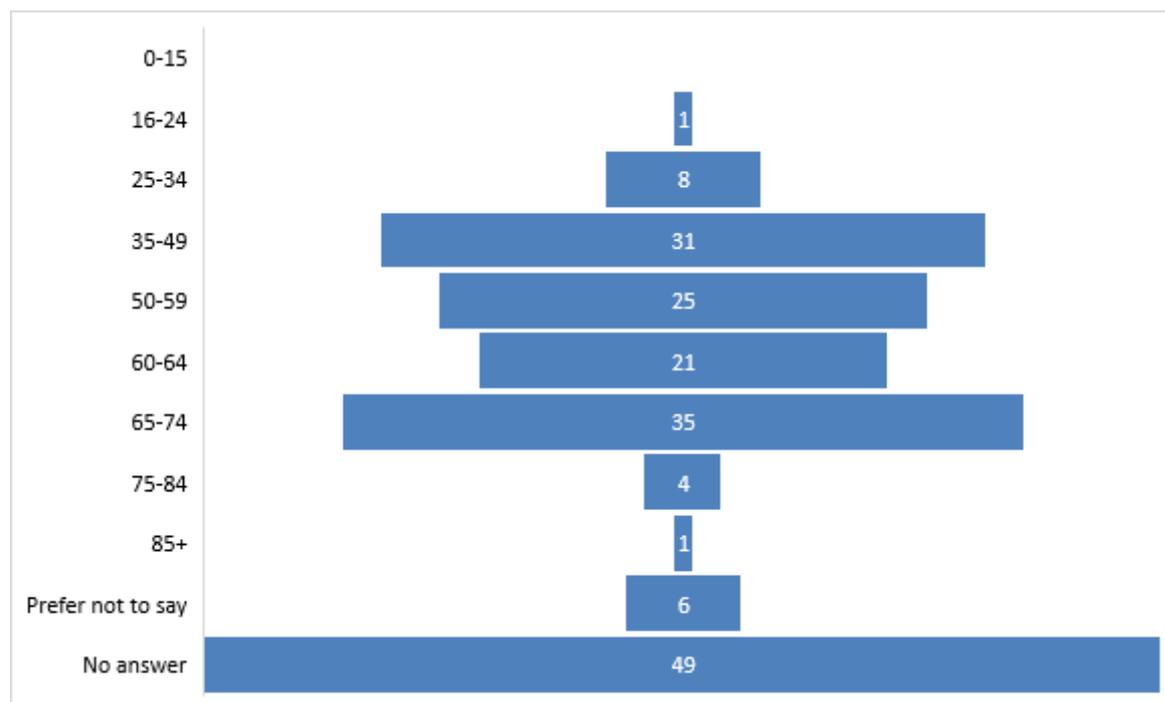
4.1. This chapter summarises the number of consultation responses received and who responded to the consultation.

There were a total of 181 respondents to the consultation by questionnaire:

- Of the 181 responses to the consultation questionnaire, 152 were received online and 29 were hard copy responses
- More than 50 people attended the consultation events.

4.1.1. Age

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents' ages. The data indicates that a large proportion of respondents were aged between 65 and 74 years, although 35-49 year olds are also well represented.



Respondents by age

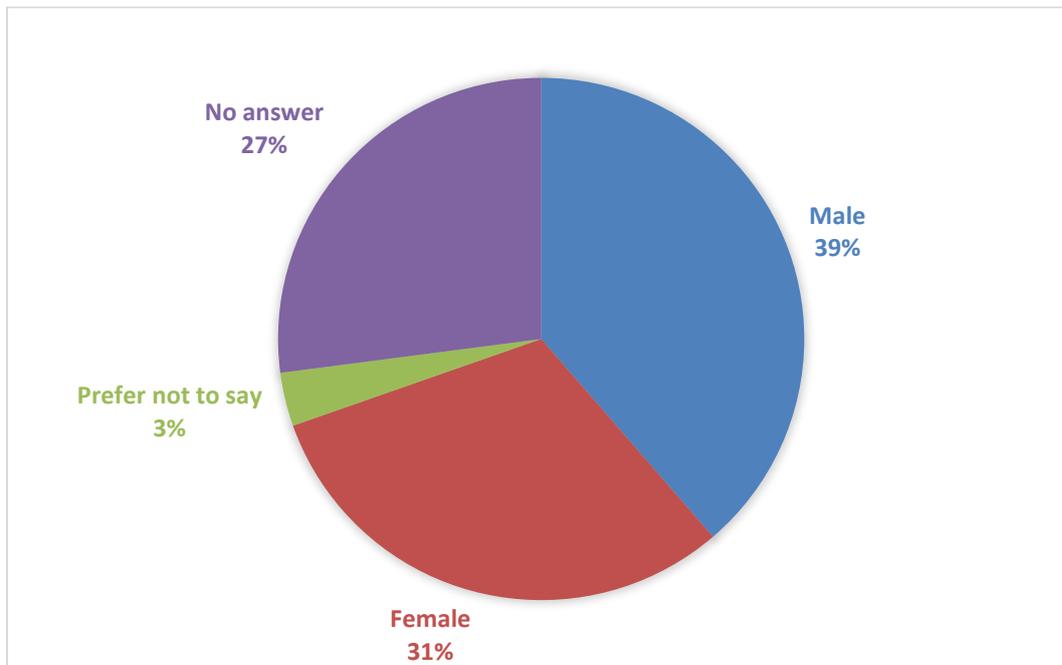
4.2. Respondent Demographics

The following section documents the demographics of the respondents. This data was collated using the 'About You' questions in the questionnaire.

4.2.1. Gender

- 39% of respondents were male
- 31% of respondents were female
- 3% of respondents preferred not to state their gender.
- 27% of respondents chose not to answer

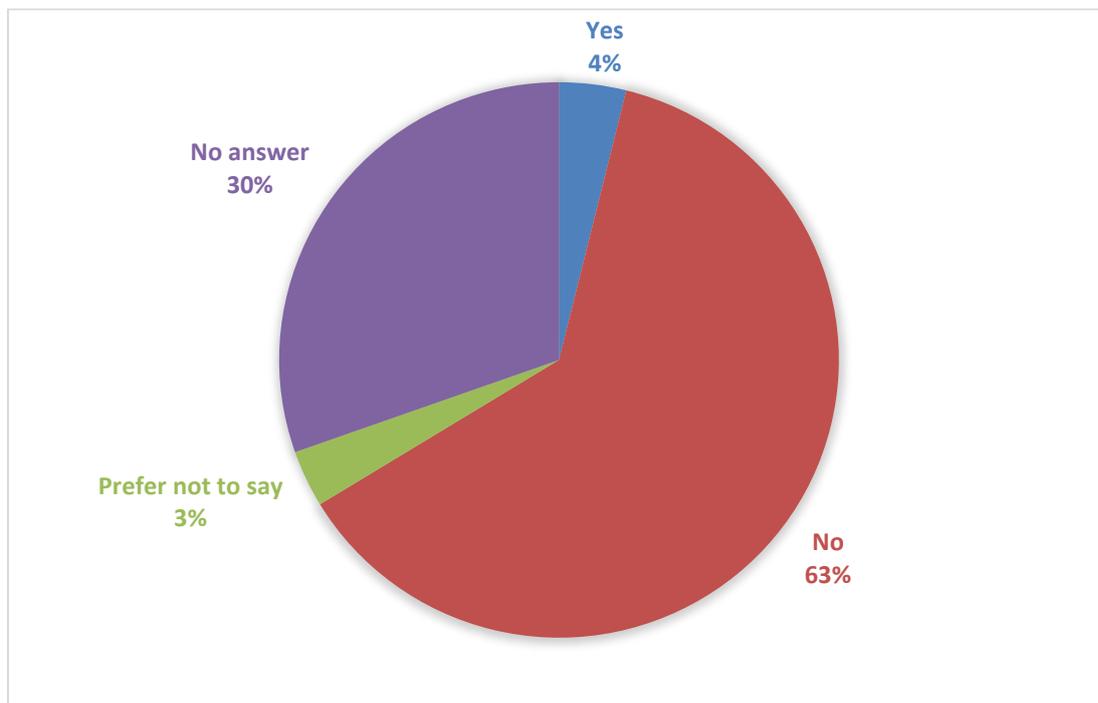
Results are shown in the pie chart below.



Respondents by Gender

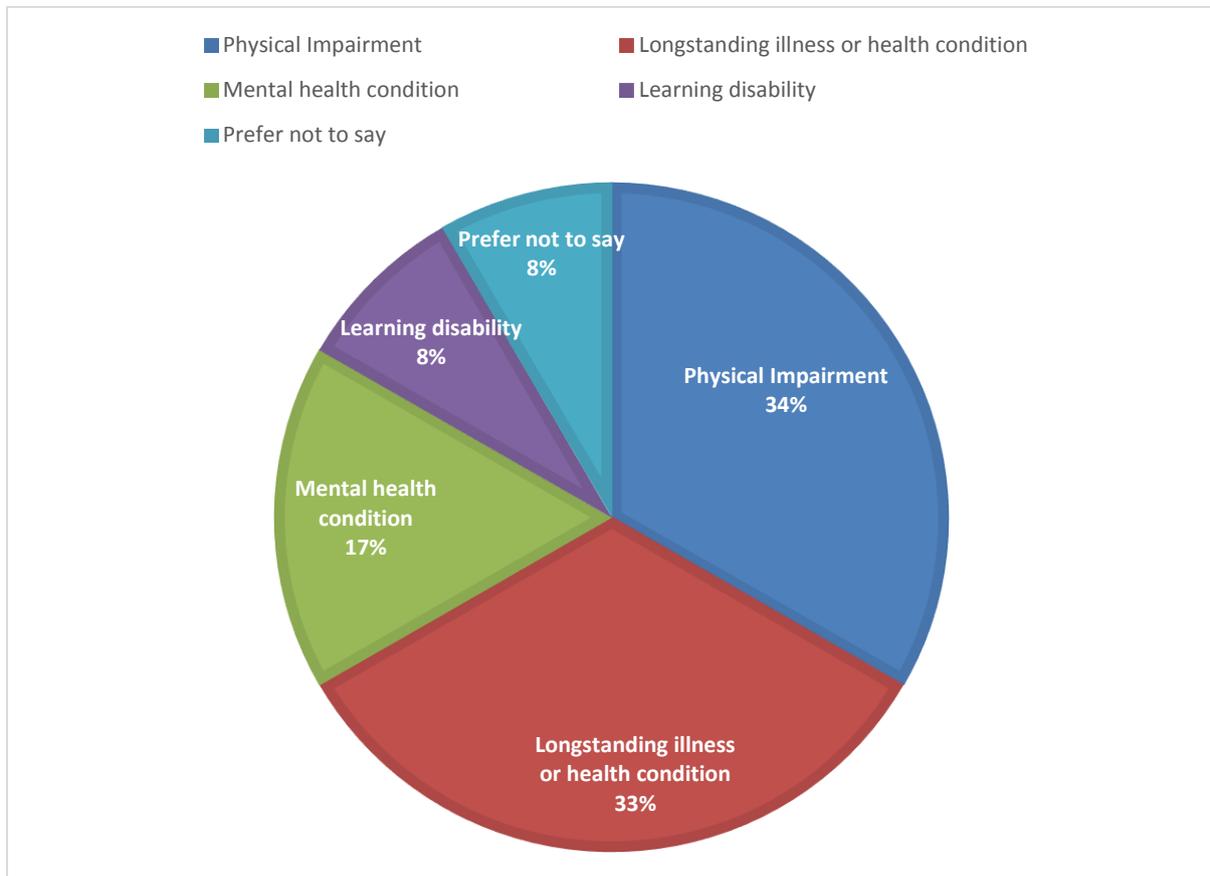
4.2.2. Disability

- 63% of respondents did not consider themselves having a disability
- 4% of respondents did consider themselves having a disability
- 3% preferred not to say.
- 30% did not answer



Respondents by disability

Of those that stated they considered themselves as having a disability, the impairments that affected each respondent are shown in the pie chart below, (some respondents may have more than one type of disability).

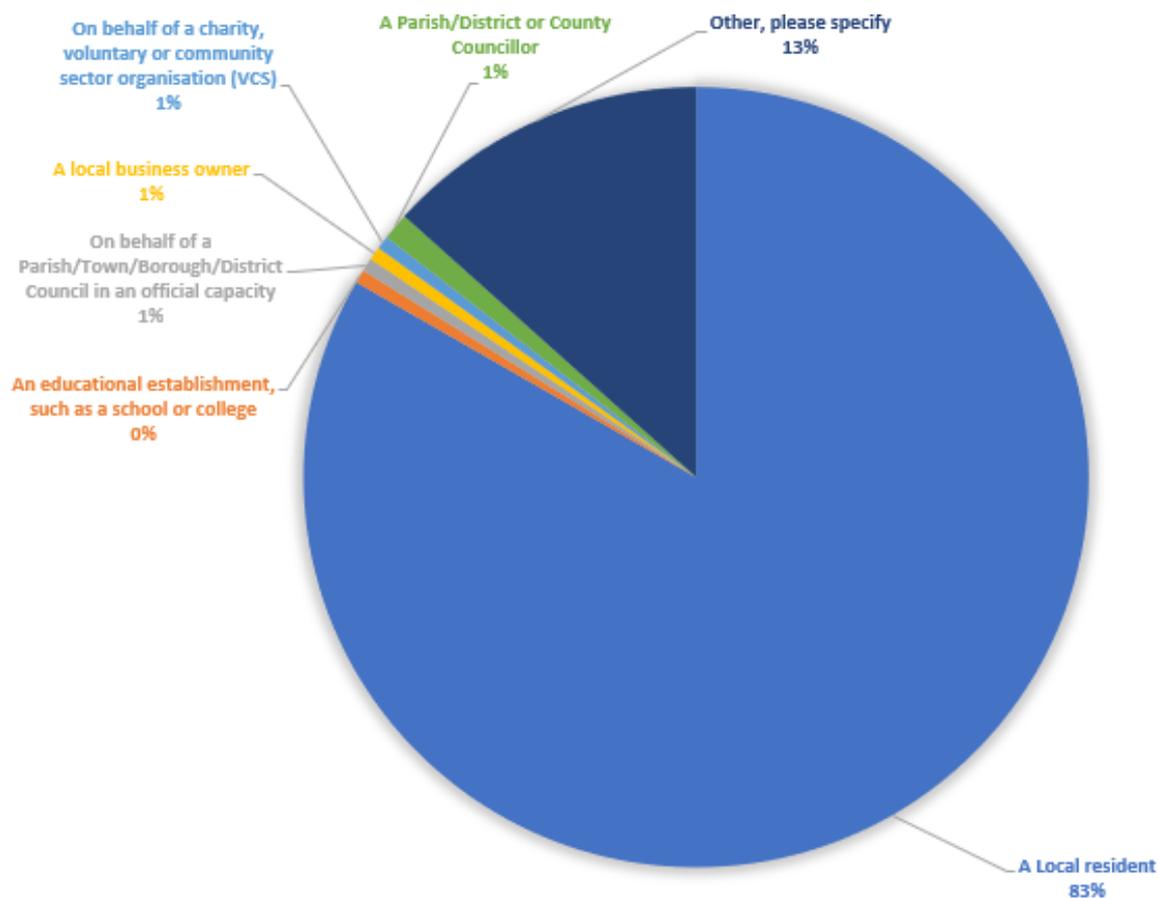


Disability impairments

5. Consultation Results

5.1. Q1. Are you responding as...?

The 181 questionnaire responses were analysed together to give an overall picture of the attitude towards the proposals.



Analysis of respondent type

Q1a. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (local community group, resident's association, Council, local business owner, charity, voluntary or community sector organisation), please tell us the name of the organisation?

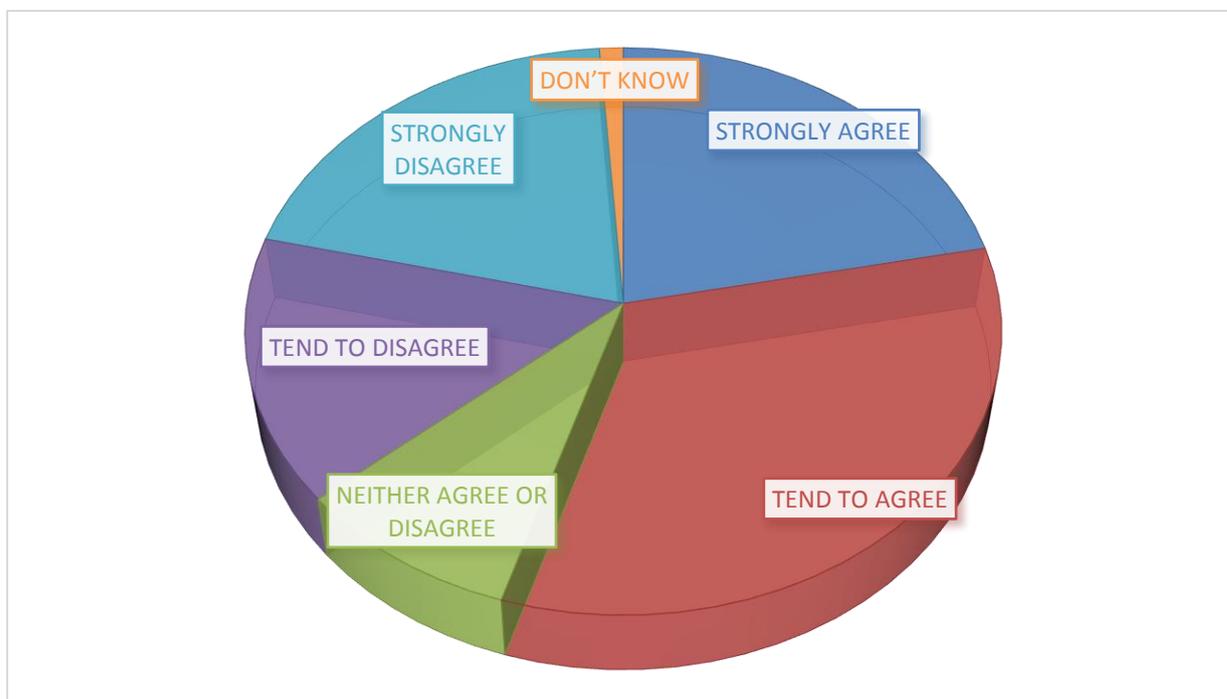
This question was answered 4 times.

5.2. Q2. Please tell us the first 5 digits of your postcode?

This question was answered 177 times. Whilst the vast majority of respondents live in the immediate vicinity of the proposed works responses were also received from respondents outside of the Tonbridge and Malling district boundary. Postcodes given covered areas such as Dover, Thanet, Folkestone and Hythe, Gravesend, Dartford and Bexley.

5.3. Q3. Considering the scheme as a whole to what extent do you agree or disagree with the A20 London Road Highway Improvements Scheme?

There were 179 responses to this question:



22% of respondents strongly agreed

33% of respondents tend to agree

15% of respondents tend to disagree

20% of respondents strongly disagreed

10% of respondents either did not know or did not agree nor disagree

5.4. Q3a. Please add any comments

This question was answered 125 times. The answers have been broken down into different themes, some respondents may have covered a number of themes in their answers.

30% of respondents did not like the shared use footway/cycleway and expressed concerns over its safety

14% of respondents disliked the inclusion of the merge lanes at the two junctions as they felt this would lead to conflict between drivers

13% of respondents liked the scheme and felt that it will address many of the issues affecting the A20

11% of respondents felt that the shared use facility was too stop/start and that it should be continuous across all junctions, therefore, giving cyclist priority over vehicles

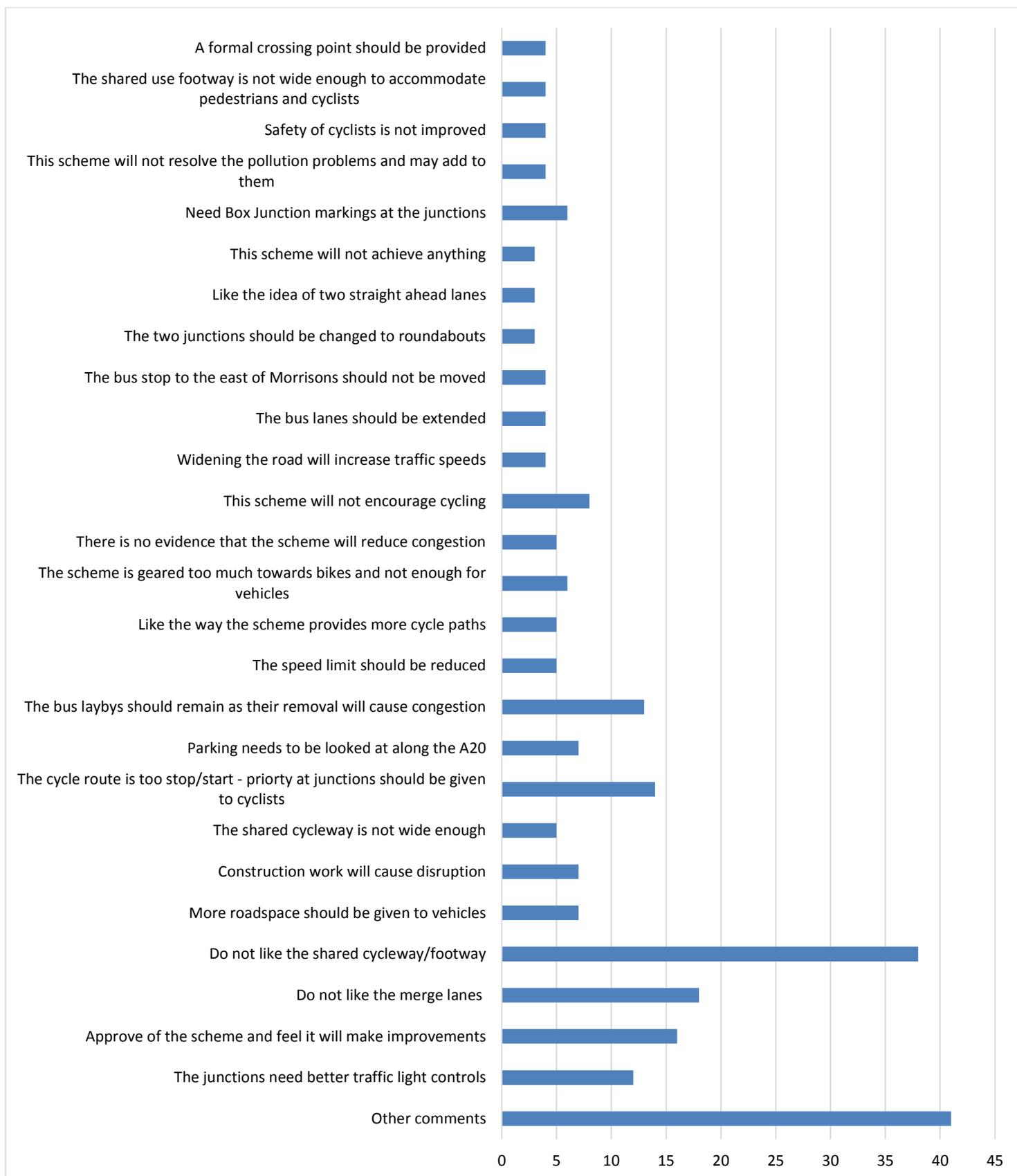
10% of respondents felt that better traffic signals are needed at the two main junctions (A20/New Hythe Lane and A20/Station Road/New Road)

10% of respondents felt that the bus laybys should remain, as removing them would cause further congestion

"Shared use footpaths should be avoided, because it brings conflict with pedestrians."

"Glad to see the New Hythe Lane/A20 junction is being improved to help traffic flow, particularly in the rush hour. Can't see anything negative with the scheme."

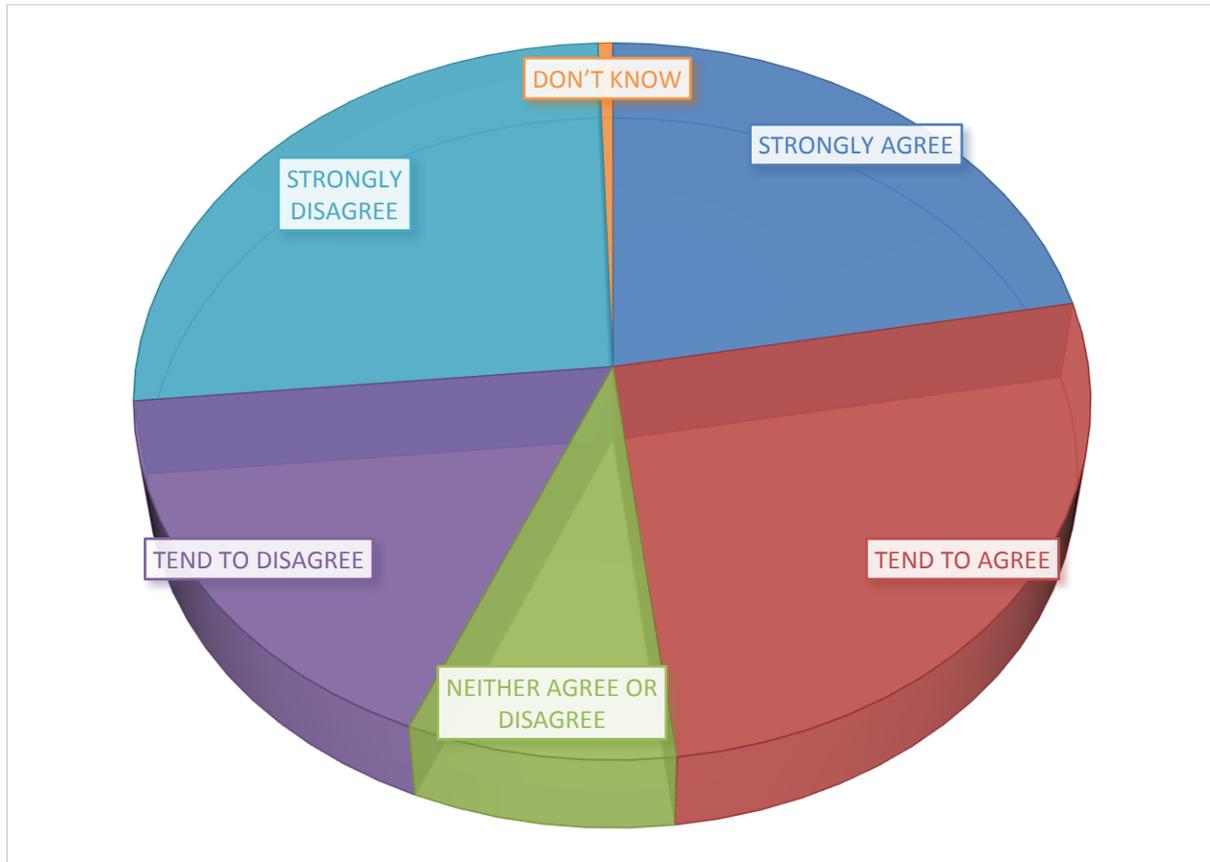
"Going from 1 to 2 lanes at junctions and then back to one lane only increases congestion and aggressive driving."



'Other comments' were made covering topics such as placing cameras at the junction of New Hythe Lane and London Road and concerns over noise pollution but no comment received more than 2 responses and therefore have not been included in the themed results.

5.5. Q4a. Considering phase one only to what extent do you agree or disagree with the installation of a shared cycleway/footway?

There were 181 responses to this question



22% of respondents strongly agree

26% of respondents tend to agree

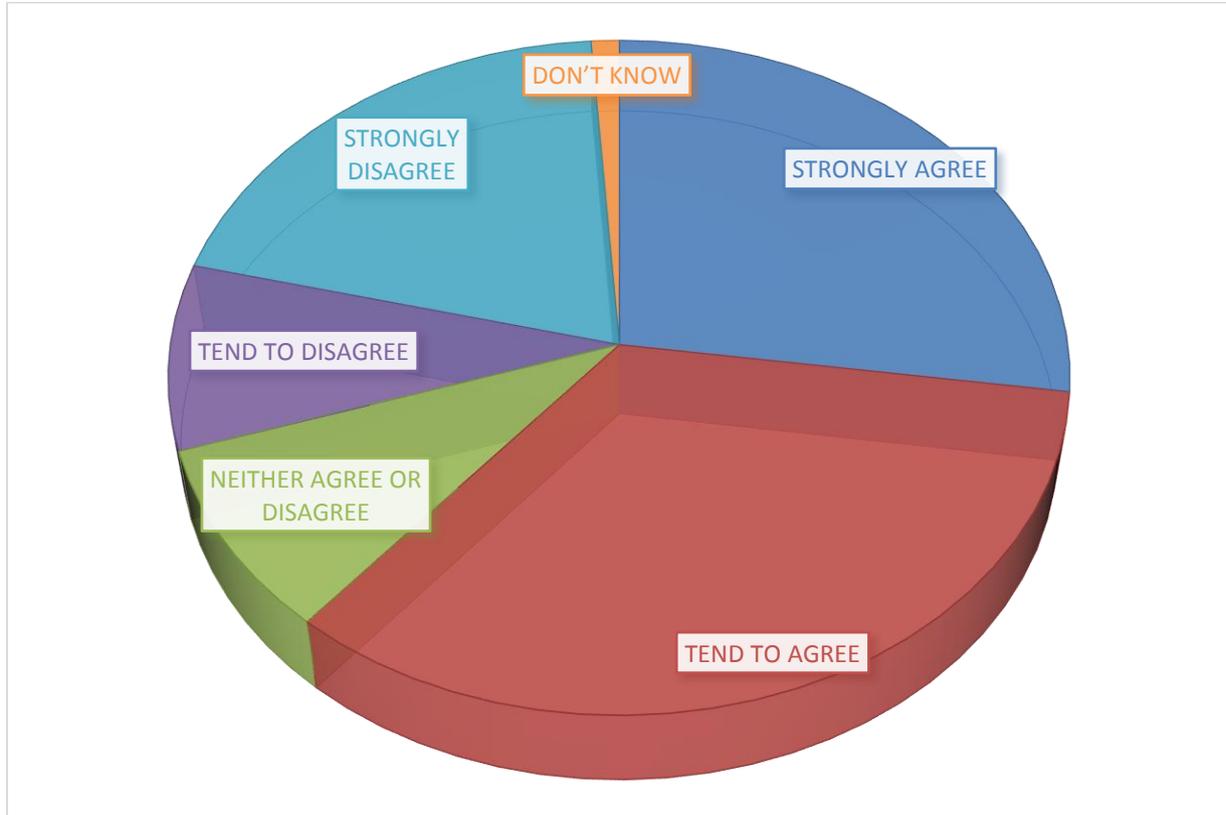
17% of respondents tend to disagree

26% of respondents strongly disagree

9% of respondents either did not know or neither agree nor disagree

5.6. Q4b. Considering phase one only to what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested improvements to the A20/New Hythe Lane junction?

There were 180 responses to this question



27% of respondents strongly agree

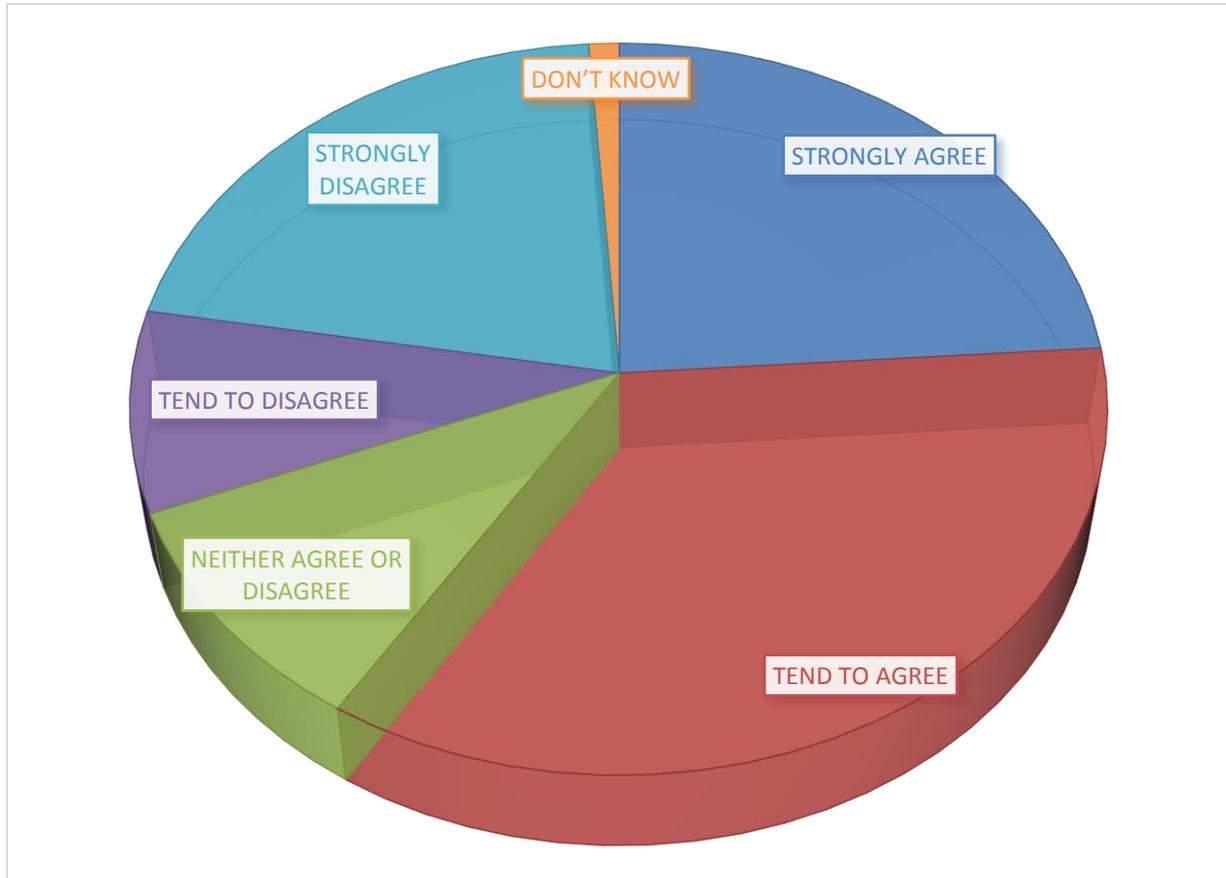
34% of respondents tend to agree

9% of respondents tend to disagree

20% of respondents strongly disagree

10% of respondents either did not know or neither agree nor disagree

5.7. Q4c. Considering phase two only to what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested improvements to the A20/Station Road/New Road junction improvements?



24% of respondents strongly agree

35% of respondents tend to agree

9% of respondents tend to disagree

21% of respondents strongly disagree

11% of respondents either did not know or neither agree nor disagree

5.8. Q4d. Please add any comments.

This question was answered 95 times. The answers have been broken down into different themes, some respondents may have covered a number of themes in their answers.

23% of respondents did not like the shared footway/cycleway

15% of respondents did like not the inclusion of the merge lanes

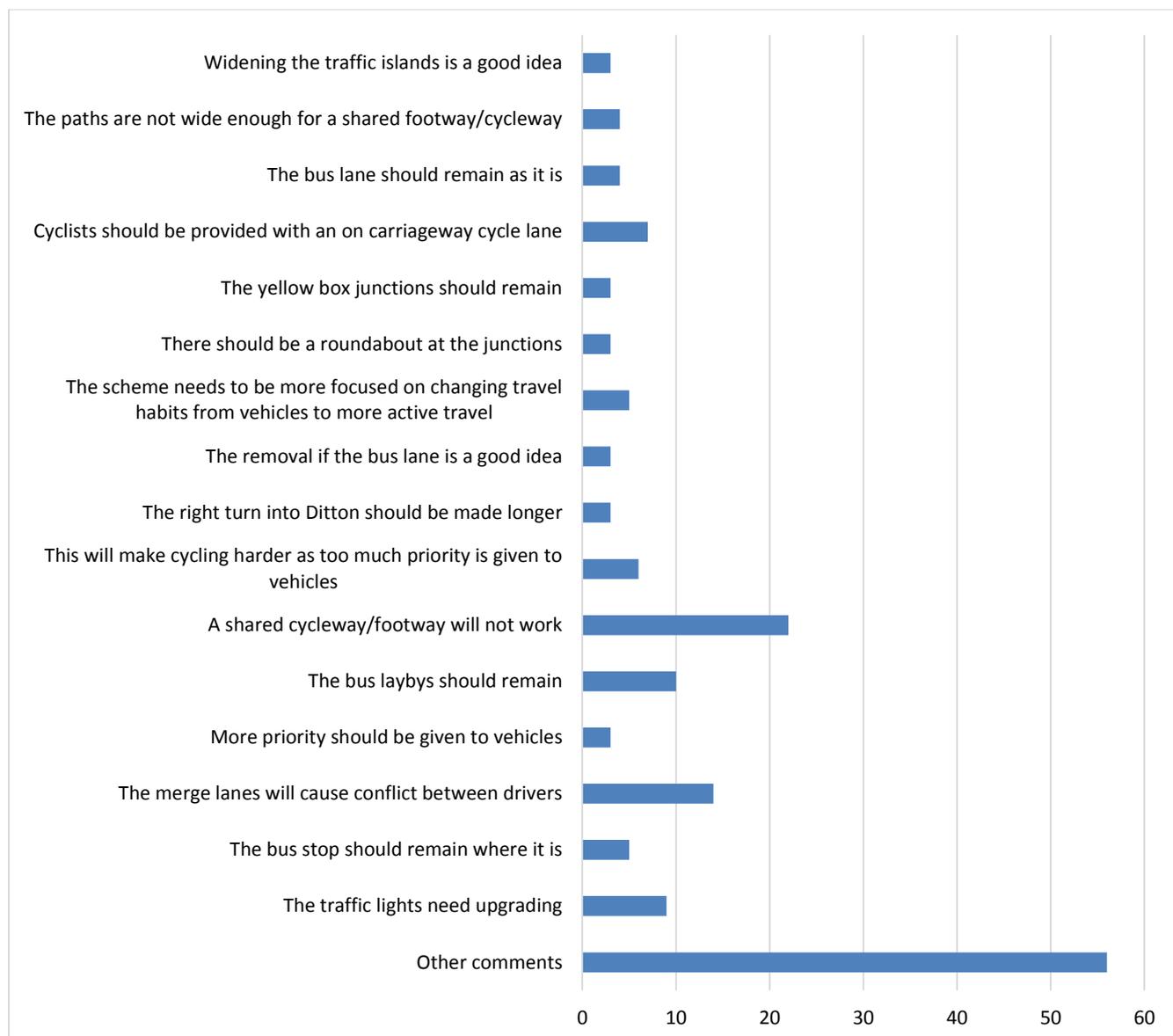
11% of respondents felt that the bus laybys should remain as they are

9% of respondents felt that the traffic light phasing needs adjusting

"If you want people to cycle, benefitting from a healthy and pollution free form of transport, you need to make cycling the easiest method of transport, not harder and more inconvenient."

"I strongly disagree with removing the bus laybys as this will mean buses blocking the entire lanes at bus stops."

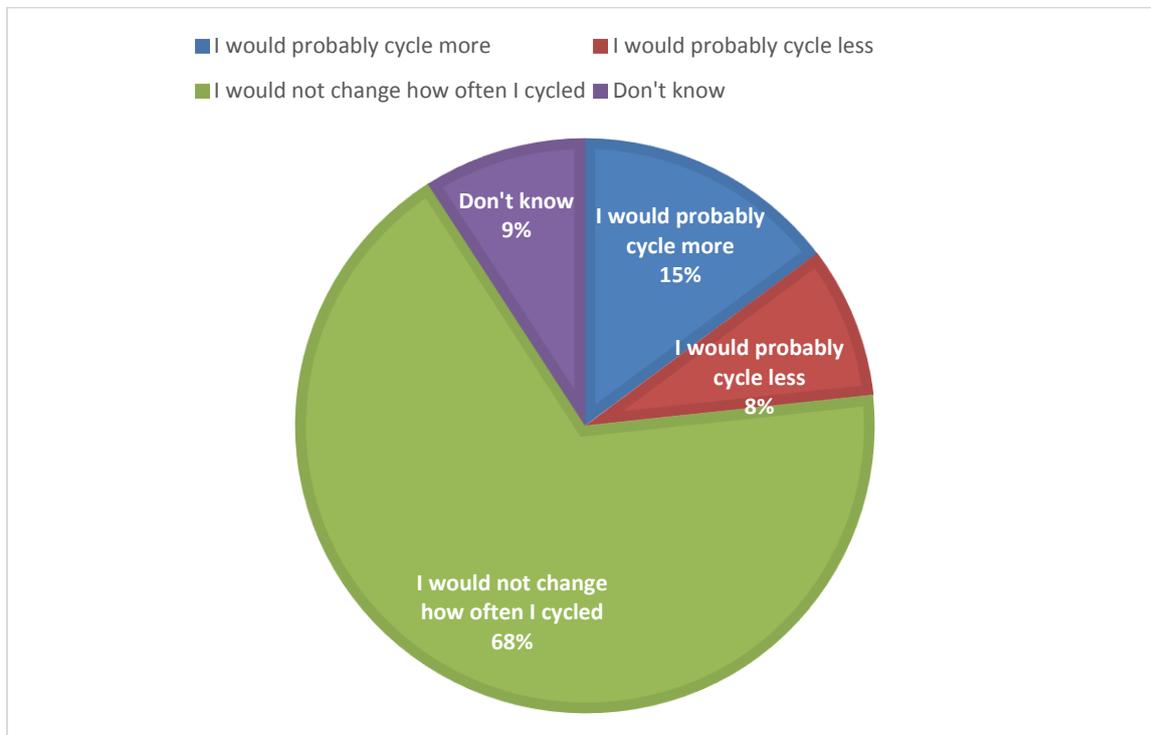
"Like the idea of widening the refuge islands to allow for full length bicycles - will also help those with pushchairs, mobility scooters etc"



'Other comments' were made covering topics such the installation of cat's eyes and issues with parking, calling for both a reduction in parking along the A20 and an increase, but no comment received more than 2 responses and therefore have not been included in the themed results.

5.9. Q5a. If the scheme was implemented do you think this would affect how often you cycled?

This question was answered 176 times



5.10. Q5b. Please add any comments below

This question was answered 85 times. The answers have been broken down into different themes, some respondents may have covered a number of themes in their answers.

28% of respondents said that they did not cycle, for some this was due to disability, others did not own a bicycle.

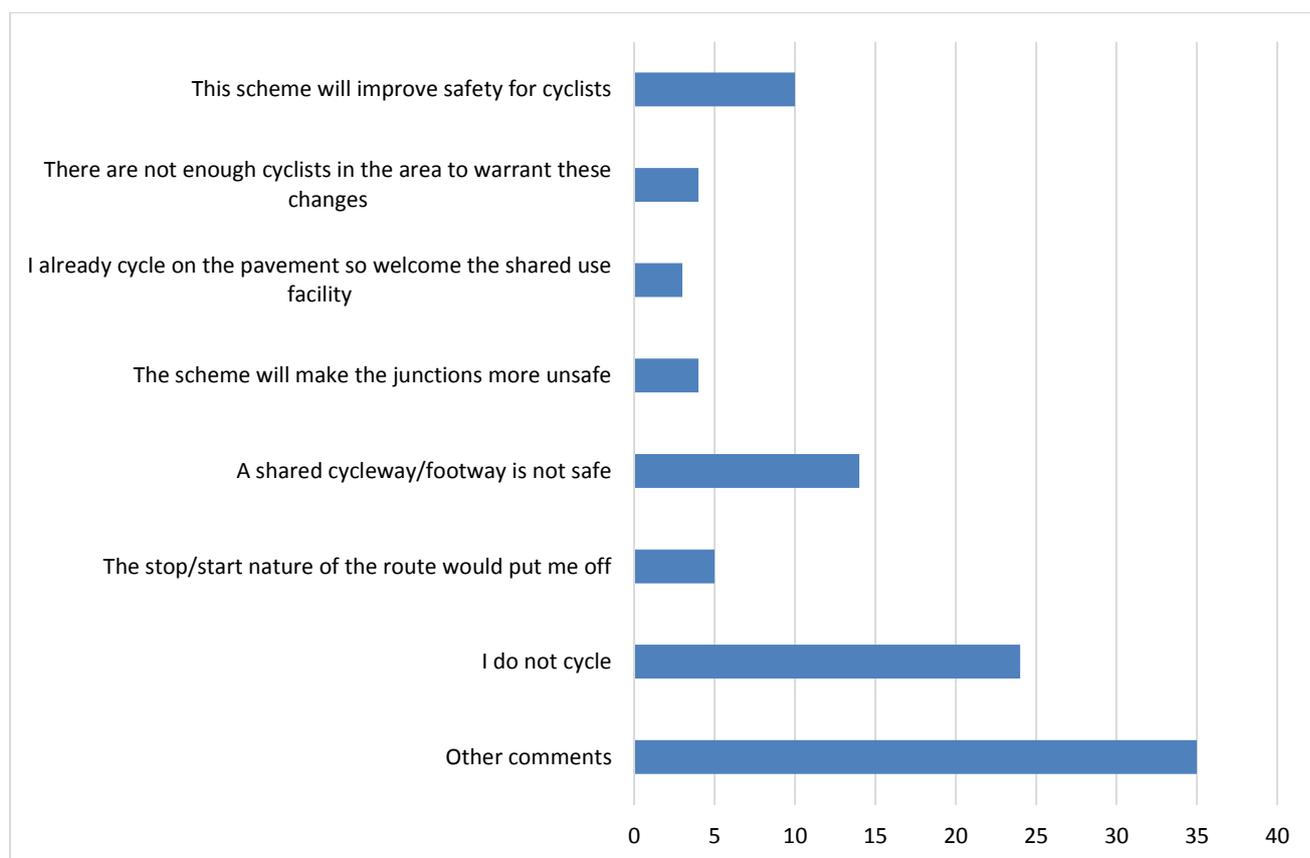
16% of respondents felt that a shared footway/cycleway is unsafe

12% of respondents felt that the scheme would improve safety for cyclists, including children.

“Certainly I would not be encouraged to cycle along the A20 if I had to stop every 30 seconds.”

“The road is very dangerous and this scheme will help.”

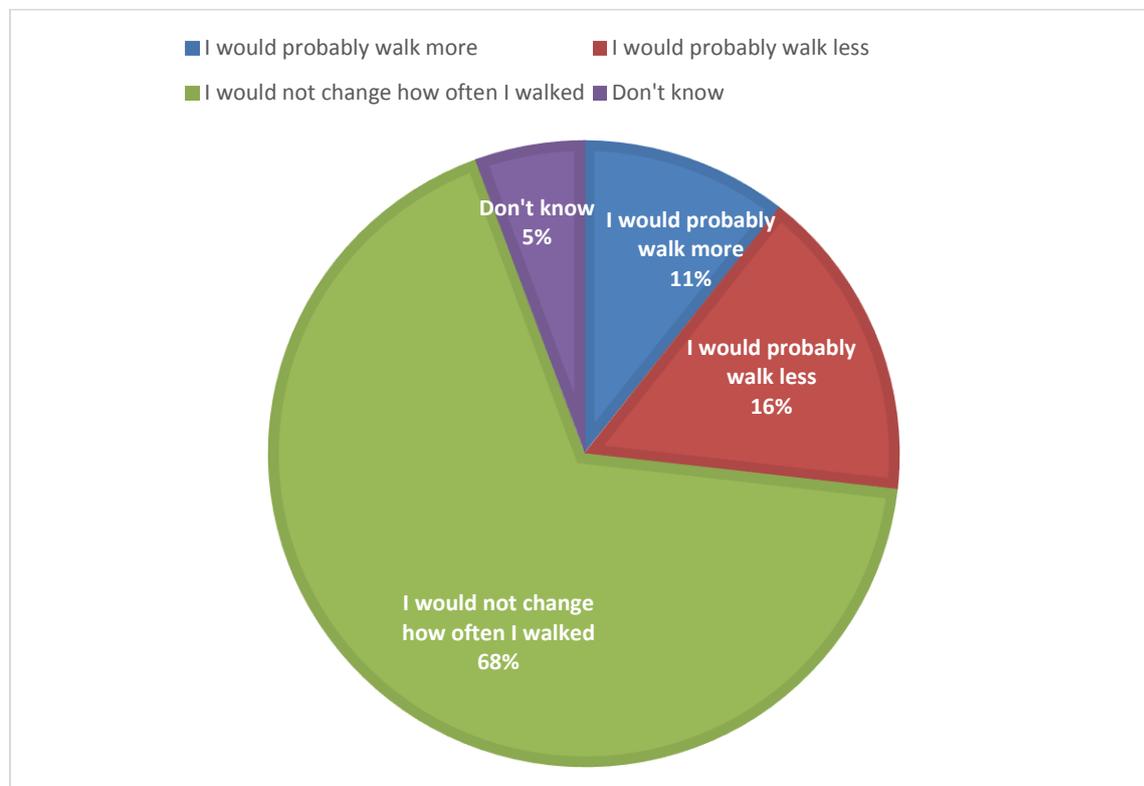
“Am a little concerned about cycles and pedestrians sharing the same path”



‘Other comments’ were made covering topics such as the speed limit of the road and that cyclists should use on carriageway cycle lanes, but no comment received more than 2 responses and therefore have not been included in the themed results.

5.11. Q6a. If the scheme was implemented do you think this would affect how often you walked?

This question was answered 179 times.



5.12. Q6b. Please add any comments below

This question was answered 63 times. The answers have been broken down into different themes, some respondents may have covered a number of themes in their answers.

40% of respondents felt that shared facilities do not work or are unsafe

10% of respondents stated that they already walk as often as possible

10% of respondents felt that the scheme would not impact their walking patterns

8% of respondents were worried about pollution along the route

"I do not like walking where bikes are in the same area."

"The road will be more polluted, more tarmac covered and with less greenery. This will not encourage people to walk."

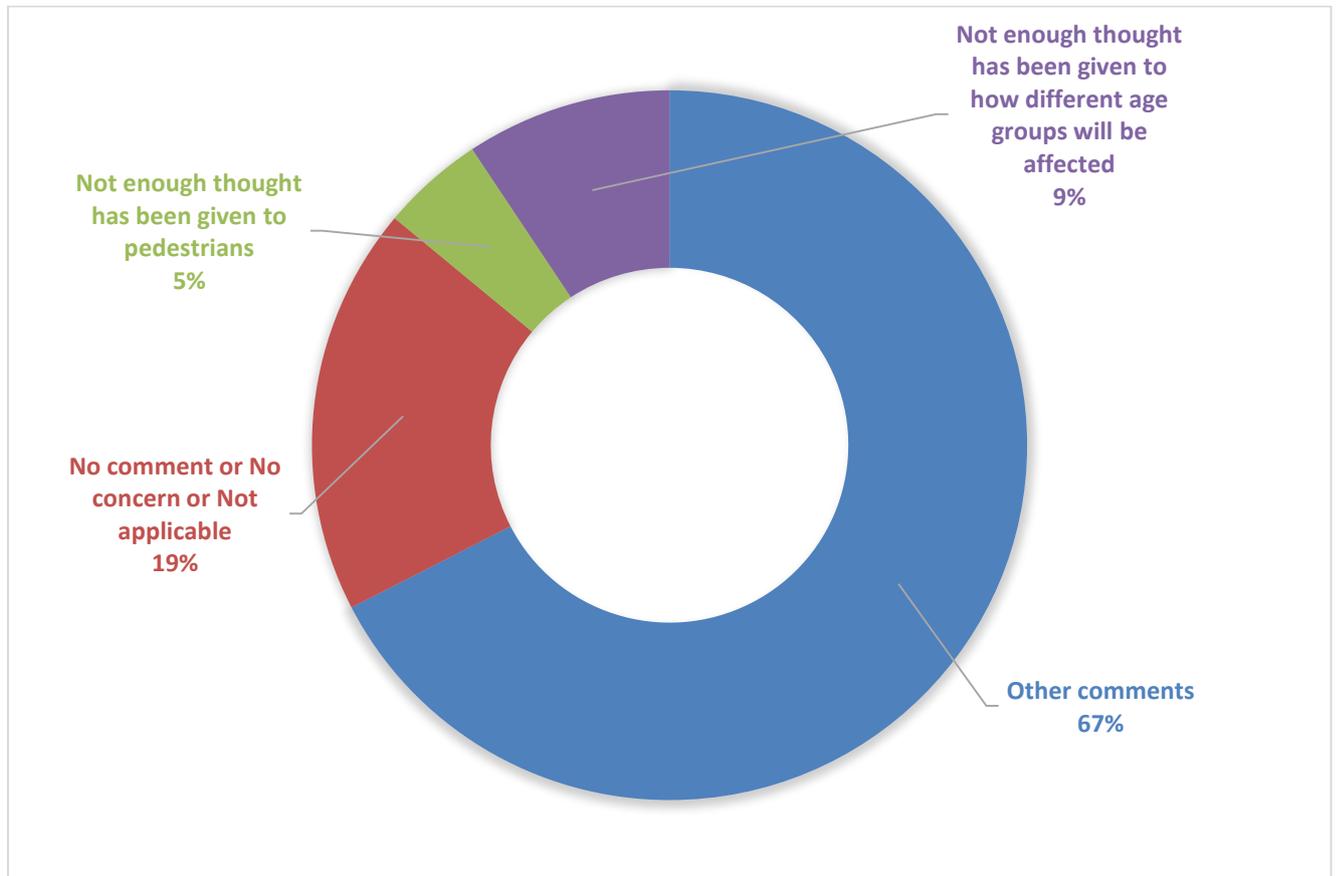
"Pedestrians should feel and be safer (assuming cyclists are responsible...)"



'Other comments' were made covering topics such as the width of the shared footway/cycleway and the aesthetics of the scheme, but no comment received more than 2 responses and therefore have not been included in the themed results.

5.13. Q7. We have completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the A20 London Road Highway Improvements Scheme.

There were 43 responses to this question



The following comments were made in response to the EqIA:

“The improvements will make a difference to the carers of those who use mobility scooters as well as the users themselves, because the scooter users will become even more independent and have an improved quality of life.”

“I have read this document and I think it covers the various considerations. There may well be difficulties of perception of increased risk for some pedestrians. Perhaps an education/awareness campaign could be run to encourage cyclists to be more responsible and considerate. (See my previous comments about use of bells). Clearly, if it is safer to cycle then cyclists of all ages will benefit.”

“Installation of a proper, on road cycle lane would mitigate many of the problems outlined in the EqIA as old, young, disabled pedestrians and mobility scooter riders would be segregated from bicycles.”

“It will impact on our household where both of us are senior citizens and already suffer from inconsiderate cyclists using pavements. While widened pavements would create less risk, the proposal for the junction of the A20 with Ditton Place would create greater risk, especially for elderly people and children.”

6. Further Consultation Responses

Chapter 5 above outlines responses which were received through the questionnaire however a number of respondents chose to contact us by other means such as email and letter. There were 23 responses from other methods.

These responses included similar observations to those raised through the questionnaire. The main concerns were regarding the installation of a shared footway/cycleway, the impact that parking may have on the flow of traffic and the phasing of the traffic lights at the two junctions (A20/New Hythe Lane and A20/Station Road/New Road).

7. Next Steps

Following the feedback from this consultation, the design team will be carefully considering points raised to establish whether further design changes are appropriate. Any changes will be incorporated into the detailed design which will be presented to the Tonbridge and Malling JTB on 18th November.

Subject to the approval of the detailed designs by the Joint Transportation Board we would expect to begin construction in late January 2020 pending coordination with other highway projects.

This report is available on our website www.kent.gov.uk/a20junctionimprovements and we will send a notification to those who have provided contact details throughout the process, including stakeholder organisations.