

Kent Street and Malling Road Proposed Junction Improvement



Consultation Report

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1. Introduction

From 23 May to 3 July 2023, Kent County Council (KCC) consulted on proposals for a junction improvement scheme at Kent Street and A228 Malling Road in Maidstone. The junction currently has very poor visibility for vehicles wishing to turn out and into the A228 Malling Road from Kent Street.

The scheme proposes to install traffic signals at the junctions on Malling Road and Kent Street, widening of the carriageway widths to aid heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and turning in to Kent Street, create a push button pedestrian crossing facility on Malling Road and construct a shared cycle and footway along Malling Road.

The following report details the purpose of the consultation and summarises the consultation process and feedback received.

Purpose of the consultation

We want to continue to understand and incorporate the views of the local community, stakeholders, and the travelling public into the design of this scheme.

The proposal includes the widening of the A228 Malling Road between Kent Street and Beech Road. This busy section is narrow and used by a large number of HGVs travelling between the M20 motorway, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. The existing carriageway width makes it very tight when large vehicles pass each other and any incidents on this route can cause a high-level of disruption to the surrounding road network.

Both Kent Street junctions have very poor visibility for vehicles wishing to turn out onto the A228 Malling Road. The scheme proposes to install traffic signals at the crossroads to assist these turning vehicles. Both Kent Street junctions will be widened to provide sufficient carriageway width for vehicles to turn in whilst another vehicle waits at the stop line. The traffic signals will also provide a pedestrian push button crossing facility across Malling Road, not only improving the area for pedestrians and cyclists but providing a vital safe link to the new bus stops proposed to the north of Kent Street.

The scheme also includes a 4-metre-wide shared cycle and footway on the western side of the Malling Road with a 1-metre-wide safety buffer to separate passing traffic from pedestrians and cyclists. A new footway link has recently been installed at the western end of Kent Street which joins up with the bridleway that runs around the

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outside of Kings Hill. This new link could result in more pedestrians and cyclists requiring a safe crossing point over the Malling Road, which the traffic signal scheme provides.

A consultation document, scheme plans and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) were made available on the consultation webpage: www.kent.gov.uk/kentstreet

People were asked to provide feedback via a consultation questionnaire, which was available online and in a paper version on request.

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 the five stages. Detailed information on each section is given in this Chapter.

Undertake Equality Impact Assessment (see Chapter 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify possible impacts on protected characteristic groups
Develop consultation process and promotional activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify stakeholders• Define consultation activities• Define communication activities and frequencies
Pre-consultation activity/engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with the local Parish Council and local KCC Members
During consultation activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation postcards delivered to businesses and residents in the area• Posters displayed at various locations including village Hall display board• Launched consultation webpage and questionnaire• Advertised consultation on social media• Responded to queries

Post consultation activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis and reporting of consultation responses• Review the proposals• Review of EqIA• Feedback to consultees and stakeholders• Attendance at Tonbridge and Malling Joint Transportation Board
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2.1 Pre-consultation activities

KCC officers held meetings with the local parish councillors and KCC members to help identify local concerns, aspirations and site limitations. The information from these meetings helped to inform the design of the proposed scheme. These meetings also identified issues beyond the remit of this project. This information will be fed back to the appropriate teams at KCC.

2.2 Promoting the consultation

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

- Posters displayed at various locations in the proposed scheme vicinity
- Webpage appeared on the main Let's talk Kent [homepage](#) and the [Highway Hub](#)
- Email sent to statutory stakeholders
- A [press release](#) was issued
- Public Notices were advertised in the local newspapers
- Social media posts promoting the consultation
- An email was sent to 2,581 people who have requested through Let's talk Kent to be kept informed of consultations on road, traffic and transport in Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling

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Consultation material

The following material was produced for the consultation and was made available on the consultation webpage:

- Consultation Document
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)
- Scheme plans
- Consultation questionnaire

In total there were 1,357 document downloads from the webpage. It was viewed 9,029 times with 3,839 unique visitors.

2.3 Feedback mechanism

People were asked to provide feedback via a consultation questionnaire, which was available online and in a Word version. The Word version was available in hard copy on request via telephone or email. Some responses were received by email and through the post, these have been included within the consultation results.

2.4 Drop-in session

Two drop-in sessions were held at Mereworth Village Hall on the 19 and 21 June 2023. The drop-in sessions gave local residents and businesses the opportunity to view larger copies of the scheme plans and discuss any queries with staff. Approximately 100 people attended the two days.

3. Equality and accessibility

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) provides a process to help us to understand how the proposals may affect people based on their protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, 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 on the webpage and on request. We will use the feedback gathered from the consultation to review and update the EqIA before the detailed design is finalised.

The following steps were taken to help ensure the consultation was accessible:

- Hard copies of the consultation questionnaire and other material were available on request throughout the consultation period
- All consultation material included a phone number and email address for people to request hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material or to ask a question
- All documents uploaded to the webpage were accessible for people using assisted technology
- Two face to face drop-in sessions was arranged for people unable to use web based material
- The consultation document, EqIA and questionnaire were made available in large print upon request

In the second part of the consultation questionnaire, we asked respondents if there was anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity. A total of 51 people answered this question. The key areas identified within the consultation responses for the EqIA are:

- Ensuring the footway was suitable for prams and mobility scooters
- Catering for people with breathing difficulties particularly with regards to air pollution
- Providing provision at crossing points for disabilities including hearing and partially sighted and / or hearing to safely cross
- Impacts during the construction process for people of age.
- Shared paths for disabilities and blind users

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The EqlA was reviewed following the consultation and a number of amendments have been made around the design. From the key comments outlined above we have sought to mitigate some of these issues by including the following:

- We have provided a minimum of 2m along the route. This will provide space prams, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.
- To assist in reducing pollution from standing vehicles we have designed in on demand motion sensors to prevent ques on the main road.
- The crossing facilities will be installed with dropped kerbs, tactile paving, cone indicators and audible indicators to help aid visual and disabled users.
- To minimise impacts during construction works a Construction Phase Plan will be developed with the Contractor to provide provision for safe walking routes with ramps where necessary.

A copy of the EqlA will be made available online at kent.gov.uk once a project page has been set up and will be included within the Joint Transportation Board Report available on the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council website – Joint Transportation Board meeting on 18 September 2023.

4. Summary of responses

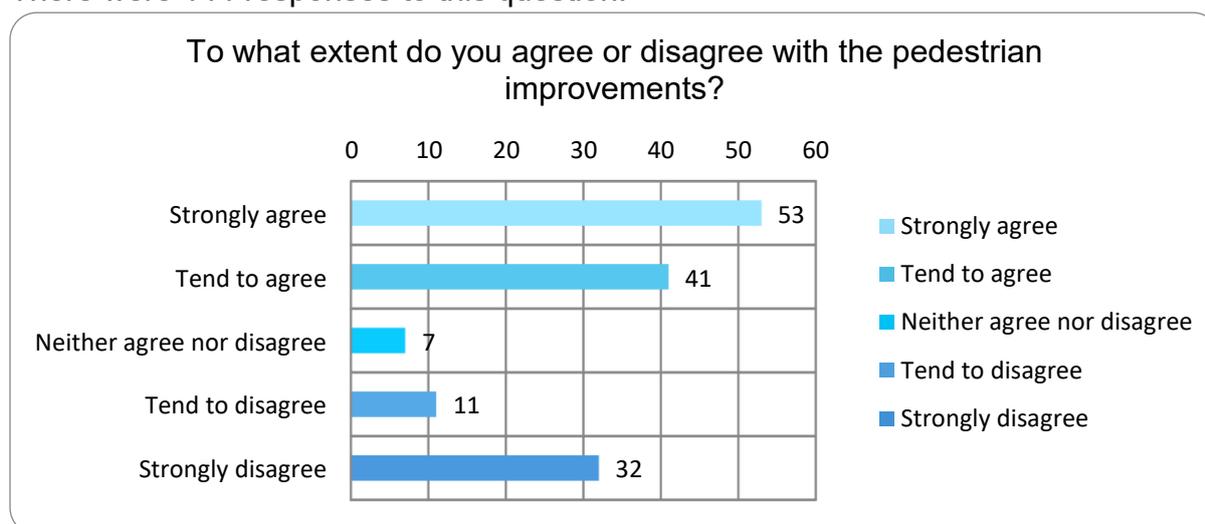
This chapter summarises the number of consultation responses received and who responded to the consultation. There was a total of 144 responses to the questionnaire.

4.1 The Scheme

In this section of the questionnaire participants were asked three questions regarding the proposals.

4.1.1 Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed pedestrian improvements?

There were 144 responses to this question:



Strongly agree	53
Tend to agree	41
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Tend to disagree	11
Strongly disagree	32

4.1.2 Q5a. Please tell us the reason for your answer in the box below.

There were 136 responses to this question. These responses were grouped into themes as shown in the tables below. Some responses had more than one theme and some participants chose not to provide a written response. One response was “Trying to cross the Malling Road from Either side of Kent Street is extremely hazardous, this scheme should help to make it less so”,

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another was “we walk this route from time to time, and it is positively scary. The pavement gets overgrown, huge lorries are inches from you, and crossing the A228 is a terrible experience.”

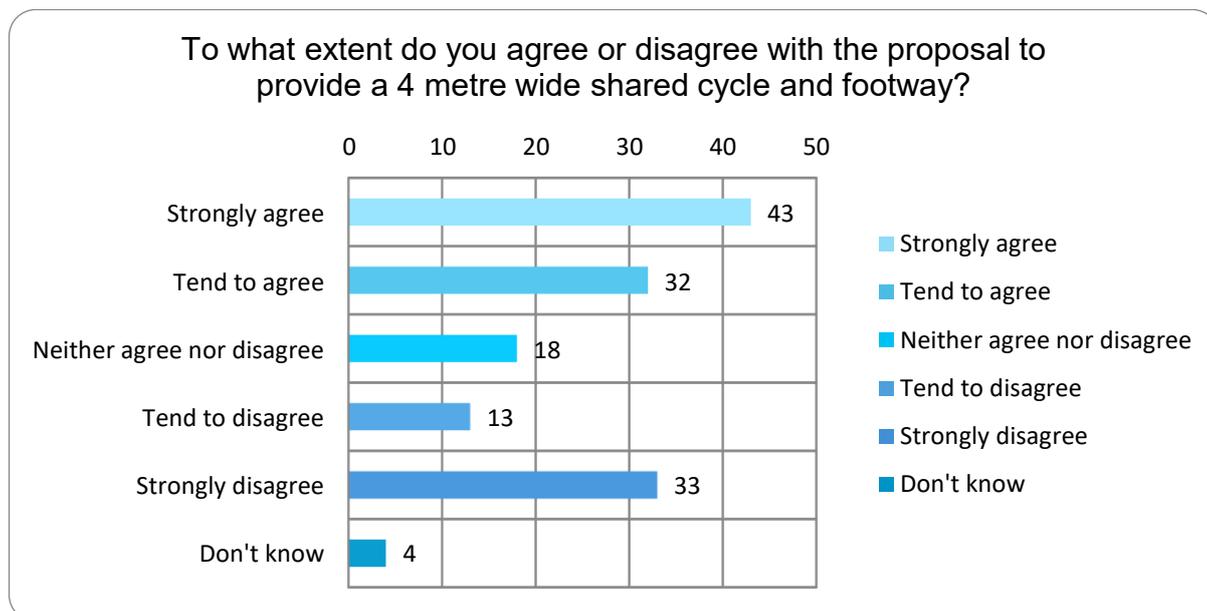
Frequency	Theme / Comment of Support
48	It will help make it safer for cyclists and pedestrians
10	Helps pedestrians cross the busy road
7	Helps with poor visibility for vehicles turning in and out of Kent Street
19	Will provide accident reduction

Frequency	Theme / Comment of Objection
14	Disagree with the scheme layout
10	Poor use of funds
6	Extravagant scheme, overkill for the size of the junction
12	Will lead to congestion

4.1.3 Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to provide a 4-metre-wide shared cycle and footway on the western side of the Malling Road towards Kings Hill?

There were 143 responses to this question:

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Strongly agree	43
Tend to agree	32
Neither agree nor disagree	18
Tend to disagree	13
Strongly disagree	33
Don't know	4

4.1.4 Q6a Please tell us the reason for your answer in the box below.

There were 134 responses to this question. These responses were grouped into themes as shown in the table below. Some responses had more than one theme or participants chose to provide a written response.

One response was “This route is seriously unpleasant as a cyclist. Better cycling provision is a must.”, another was “I have no opinion on this. I don't see why cyclists can't just use the road”.

Frequency	Theme / Comment of Support
74	Makes roads safer for cycling and easier for pedestrians to use
3	Will reduce accidents and make roads safer

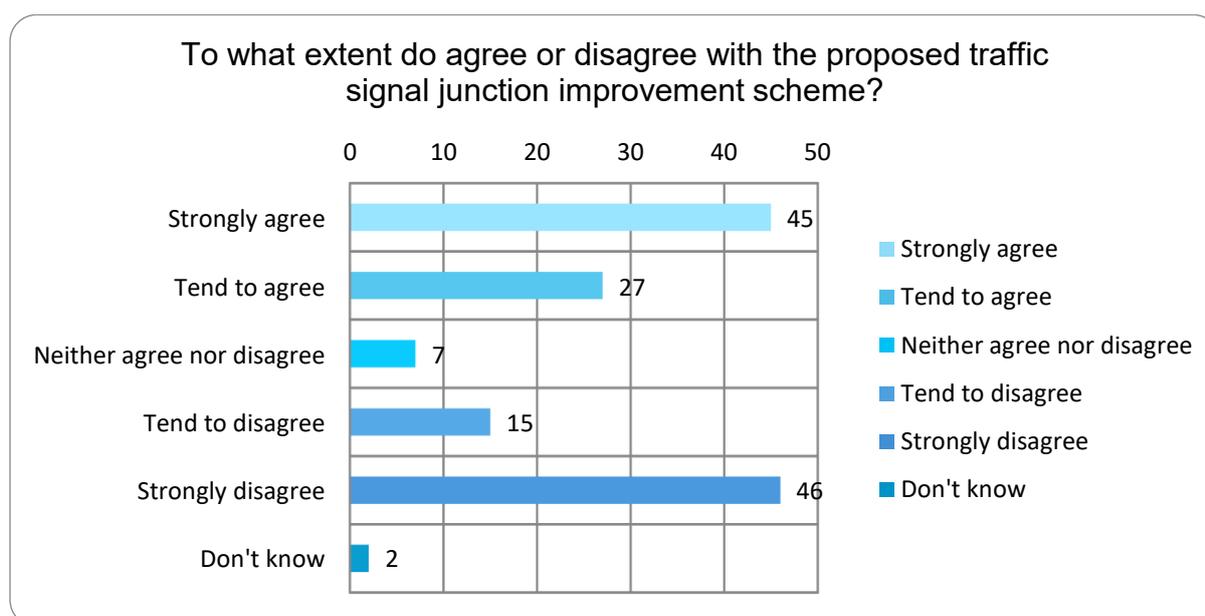
Frequency	Theme / Comment of Objection
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31	Not enough cyclists to justify its construction
5	Shared path too wide and takes too much land
6	Will lead to congestion
2	Disagree with the scheme layout
10	Poor use of funds

4.1.5 Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed traffic signal junction improvement scheme as a whole?

There were 142 responses to this question:



Strongly agree	45
Tend to agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	7
Tend to disagree	15
Strongly disagree	46
Don't know	2

4.1.6 Q7a. Please tell us the reason for your answer in the box below.

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There were 133 responses to this question. These responses were grouped into themes as shown in the table below. Some responses had more than one theme or participants chose to provide a written response. One response was “Pedestrians need a safe crossing point as there is no easy way for them to cross from the east side of Kent Street” and another was “It will slow traffic & give pedestrians safety”.

Frequency	Theme / Comment of Support
13	Makes roads safer for cycling and easier for pedestrians to use
3	Will reduce accidents and make roads slower and safer
55	Helps with poor visibility for vehicles turning in and out of Kent Street

Frequency	Theme / Comment of Objection
5	Extravagant scheme, overkill for the size of the junction
36	Will lead to congestion

4.2 Respondent demographics

The following section documents the demographics of the respondents. This data was collated using the ‘About you’ and ‘More about you’ questions in the questionnaire for the consultation. The ‘More about you’ questions were optional and a total of 92 respondents answered these.

We found the comparison for the overall scheme where:

55 motorists - agreed - 49%

50 motorists - disagreed - 45%

7 motorists - neither - 6%

and

6 Cyclists/pedestrians - agreed - 45%

3 cyclists/pedestrians - disagreed - 33%

2 cyclists/pedestrians - neither - 22%

We also compared people that are under 50 years old and found they mostly disagreed with the overall scheme.

8 agreed - 31%

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16 disagreed - 61%

2 neither - 8%

While the over 50's mostly agreed with the overall scheme.

43 agreed - 68%

17 disagreed - 27%

3 neither - 5%

When looking at the respondents view just on the pedestrian improvements we found:

82 motorists - agreed 64%

39 motorists - disagreed 30%

7 motorists - neither 6%

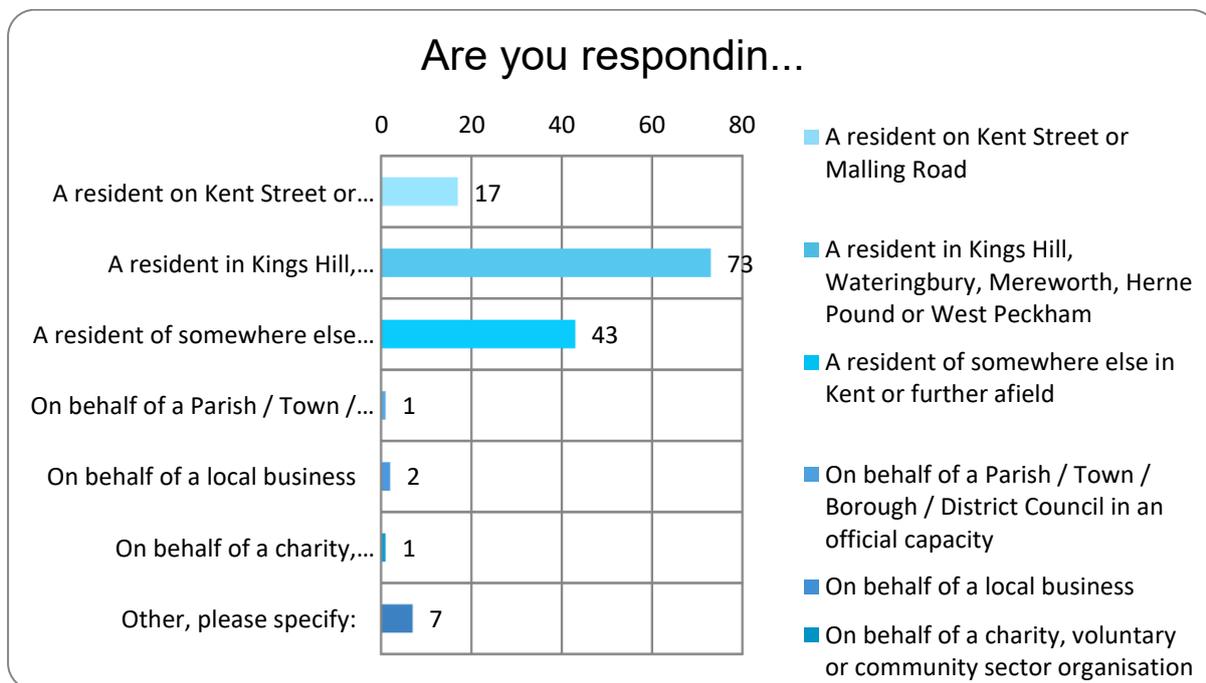
and

6 Cyclists/pedestrians - agreed 67%

3 cyclists/pedestrians - disagreed 33%

4.2.1 Q1. Are you responding as a...?

There were 144 responses to this question:



A resident of Kent Street or Malling Road	17
A resident in Kings Hill, Wateringbury, Mereworth, Herne Pound or West Peckham	73

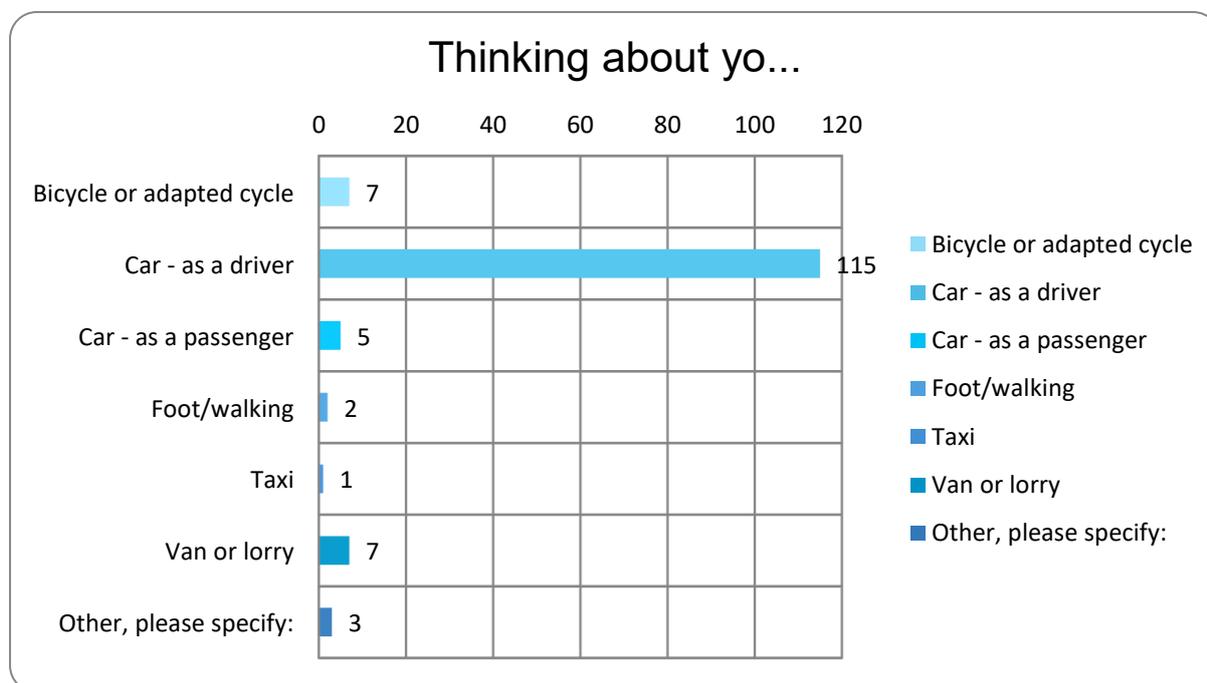
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A resident of somewhere else in Kent or further afield	43
On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity	1
On behalf of a local business	2
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	1
Other	7

Some respondents that marked 'other' specified "A commuter who drives on this road frequently and lives in Hadlow" And "Someone who uses this road regularly" as their answer.

4.2.2 Q4. Thinking about your travel habits, what is your most frequent type of transport when travelling in and around Malling Road and Kings Hill?

There were 140 responses to this question:



Bicycle or adapted cycle	7
Car - as a driver	115
Car - as a passenger	5
Foot/walking	2

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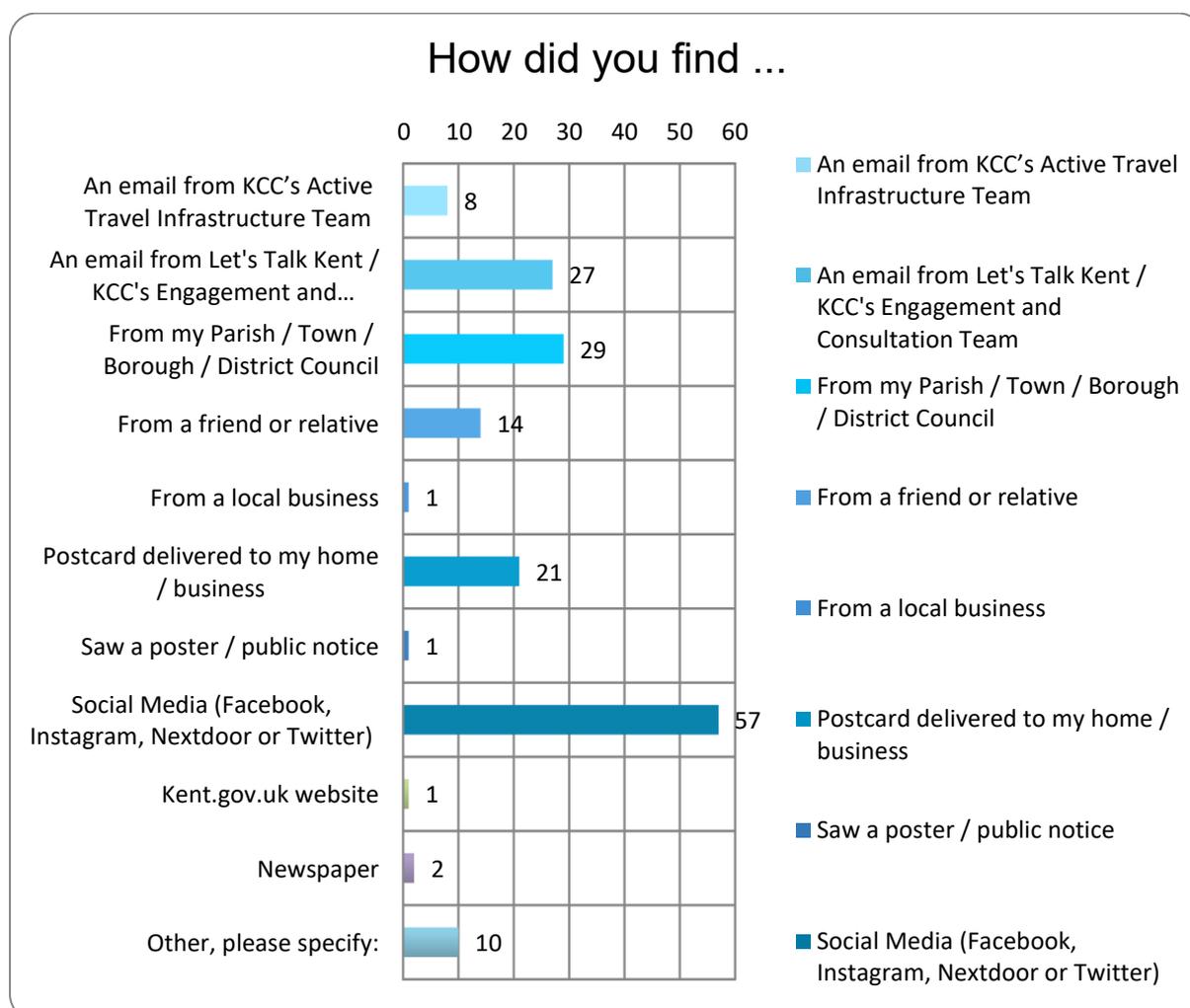


Taxi	1
Van or lorry	7
Other, please specify:	3

Two people listed coach and farm vehicles under the 'other' section.

4.2.3 Q3. How did you find out about the consultation?

There were 171 responses to this question. Respondents were able to select multiple responses to this question.



An email from KCC's Active Travel Infrastructure Team	8
An email from Let's Talk Kent / KCC's	27

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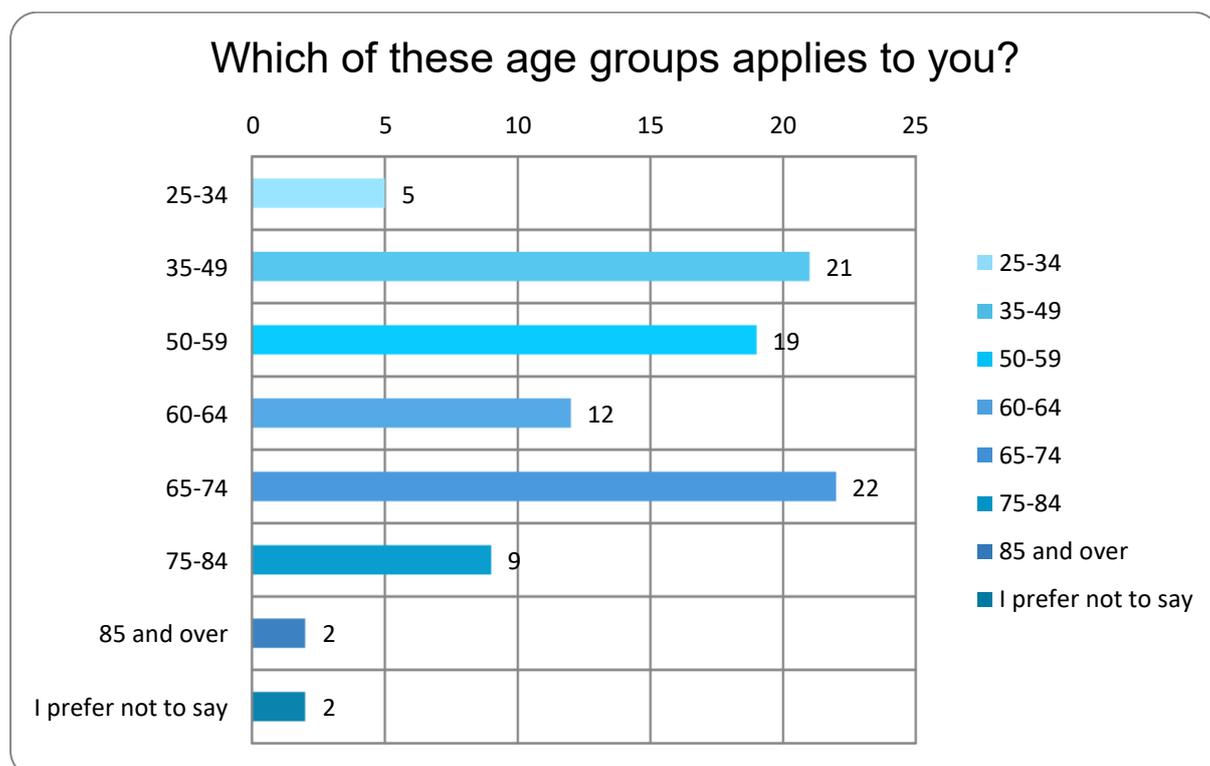


Engagement and Consultation Team	
From my Parish / Town / Borough / District Council	29
From a friend or relative	14
From a local business	1
Postcard delivered to my home / business	21
Saw a poster / public notice	1
Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor or Twitter)	57
Kent.gov.uk website	1
Newspaper	2
Other, please specify:	10

Some that specified other included local MP and residence association.

4.2.4 Q10. Which of these age groups applies to you? Please select one option.

92 people answered this question:

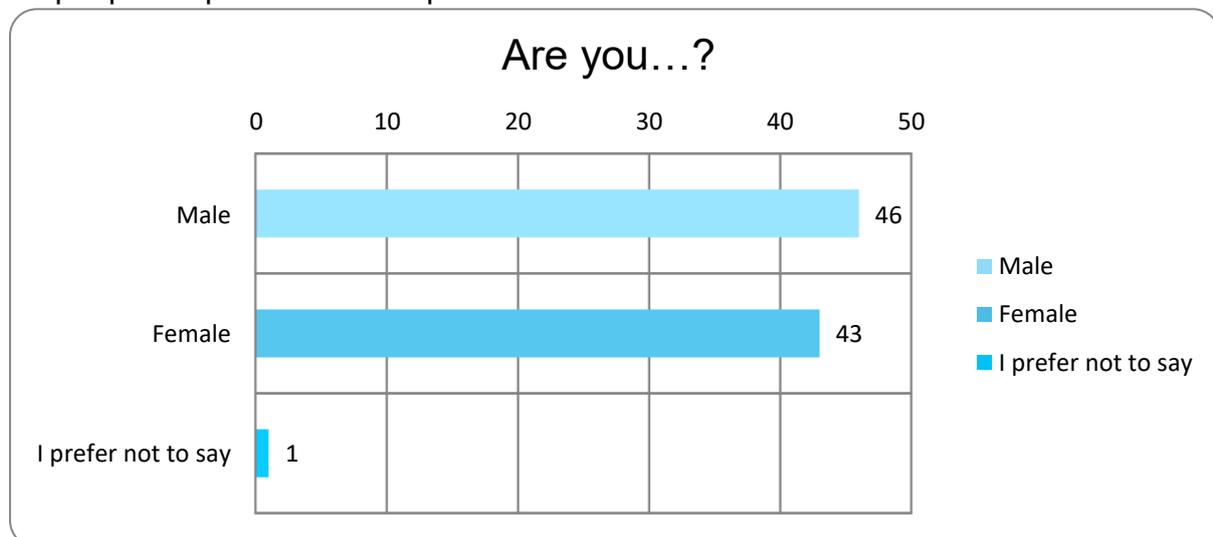


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Aged 25-34	5
Aged 35-49	21
Aged 50-59	19
Aged 60-64	12
Aged 65-74	22
Aged 75-84	9
Aged 85 and over	2
Preferred not to say	2

4.2.5 Q9. Are you...? Please select one option.

90 people responded to this question.

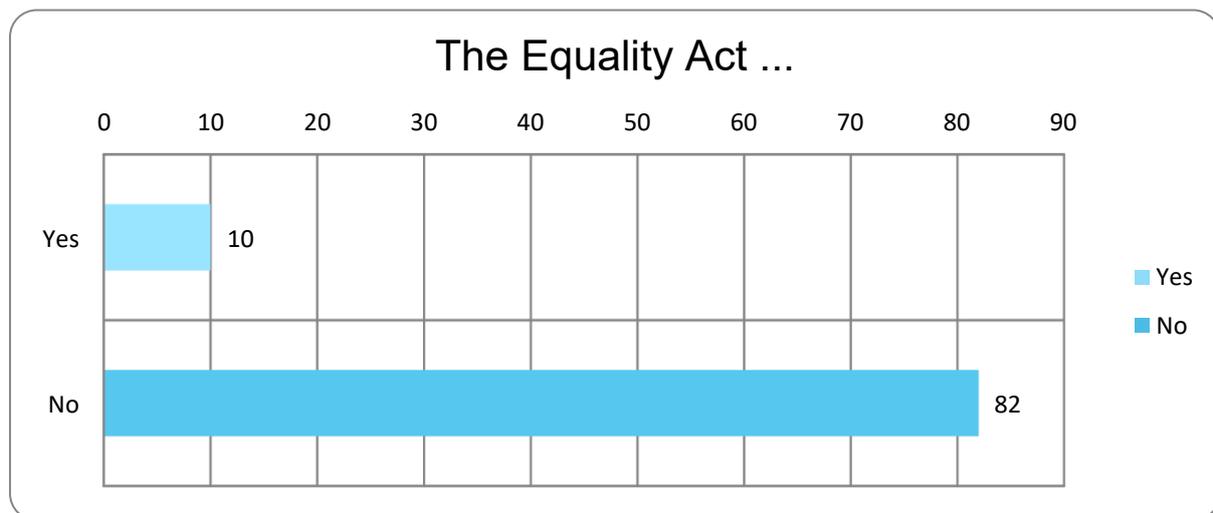


Male	46
Female	43
Prefer not to say	1

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4.2.6 Q11. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

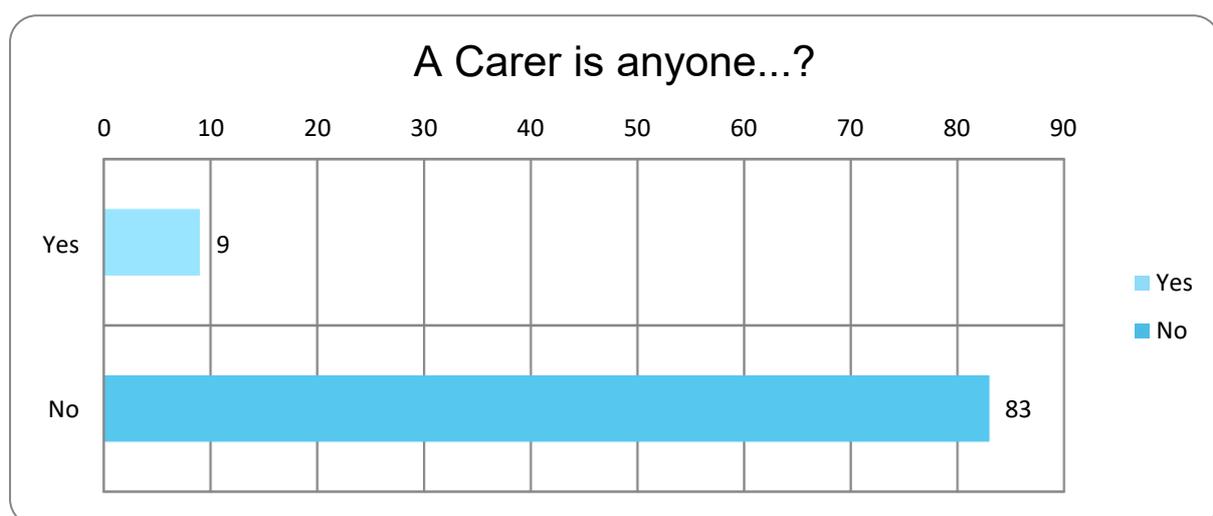
92 people answered this question.



Yes	10
No	82

4.2.7 Q12. Are you a carer?

92 people answered this question.



Yes	9
No	83

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5. Next steps

Following the feedback from this consultation, the design team will carefully consider points raised to establish whether further design changes are appropriate and can be made.

It can be seen from the consultation that the majority response is supporting the proposed scheme works. Statistically the response rate is small, especially compared to the number of views of the consultation documents.

This consultation report will be presented to the Tonbridge & Malling Joint Transport Board (JTB) on 18 September 2023.

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