

Results from the graffiti consultation

The consultation asked respondents for their views on graffiti within the borough and also asked for views on the use of graffiti walls.

The consultation was open from 22 January to 29 February 2024, and we received 115 responses.

1. Have you seen any graffiti in the borough

Yes: 105

No: 8

Don't know: 2

2. If so, are you concerned about this?

Yes: 78

No: 27

Don't know: 7

3. The Borough Council is working to tackle this issue and as part of this we are considering the use of graffiti walls. Graffiti walls are an area which can be legally used to do graffiti. These differ from street art which is generally more visually appealing. Would you be happy to see graffiti walls used in the borough?

Yes: 57

No: 47

Don't know: 11

4. If you answered 'no' or 'don't know' to the question above, why was this?
Please explain below:

"Because some of the graffiti in Tonbridge was obscene and it will only encourage this to be done under the guise of art".

"Graffiti walls encourage tagging which will spread to areas around the wall. It would be naive to think those doing it would stick to the allocated areas".

"It won't deter graffiti on other surfaces".

"I am unconvinced that an 'approved' wall will reduce graffiti. It may appeal to 'taggers' who are interested in the artistic value, but will that include all people who spray walls?"

"It makes everywhere look disgusting, would this wall be tucked away from the main town"

"It will make people think it is ok to deface buildings in this way"

"One man's waste is another man's treasure. The same is said for art.

*Clearly the tags are not visual appealing to 99% of people and to allow one allows all! It opens up for people to carry paint and pens to carry out tags elsewhere on a whim. The Waitrose supermarket in tonbridge still says c**t on the side after numerous cleans. Graffiti needs to be discouraged not encouraged"*

"There will still be graffiti elsewhere as well as on the wall"

“Allowing some graffiti will lead to more in other areas”

“It will still be an eye saw and it will be unfair if it is put up near a local business or homes. Even if put up in an area like a park it will just be an eye saw.”

“Would prefer a proper street art wall”

“I would only want them if they are a proved deterrent from graffiti appearing across the town.”

“Look awful i never let my kids draw on my walls at home so why on walls outside?”

“It would depend on where they are and what evidence there is that they would deter people from graffitiing anywhere and everywhere”

“The issue is there is too much graffiti in the borough. Graffiti walls will introduce and legitimise graffiti in the borough. Rather than a solution it maintains the status quo. I am sceptical that graffiti walls will reduce overall graffiti as such individuals have a demonstrable willingness to subvert norms and break the law. I see no reason why they wouldn't continue to graffiti as before. A better solution would be CCTV and action from law enforcement. Graffiti is unbecoming of a rural borough like Tonbridge and Malling.”

“Allowing it legally just raises the likelihood that more people will get into it and if that's the case Tonbridge will look like the trainline into Victoria before long”

“It's an eyesore & just encourages more graffiti”

“This would entice others to tag other property when there was no access to such a wall.”

“Mural walls give licence to others to paint as they think it is acceptable.”

“Why not run a club for graffiti and art in the angel centre,”

“I detest graffiti and it is an invitation to crime. It just looks awful especially in rural or suburban areas. I would be horrified to see any in beautiful West Malling or environs. Totally out of keeping.”

“No it degrades the area. Also encourages other antisocial behaviour. Extension rebellion is spraying its logo on the train approach and bin outside the foresters. They are also fly posting every month on bus stops and empty shops on the high st. Pls prosecute them”

“Because that is not art, it is just doodling and showing off a fancy signature, i.e. Ugly self promotion!”

“Why encourage it? And doesn't this contradict the law in not selling aerosols to youths? Or are you planning to give them aerosols and hope they will only use “graffiti walls”? Which are an eyesore as well...”

“Don't encourage them! This is not art, it is extremely ugly.”

“A wall with graffiti art - maybe commissioned locally to engage young people from schools/youth clubs, that felt engaging and meaningful to TMBC and our community could be a powerful and engaging piece of art. Would a graffiti wall be essentially TMBC owned walls that would be set aside as an outlet? Or would walls like the sides of businesses CEX or the side of Poundsnd etc be left? Personally these are spaces which can look grotty and so the tags and graffiti create a more negative environment. I would want businesses to ensure graffiti is painted over and these walls kept clean or they are candidates for street art (associated with the business). Generally people don't tag over street art.”

“I understand the theory of why to provide them, but I worry they may also encourage an uptick in graffiti in the nearby surrounding region if not handled correctly. If a suitable site is found near youth oriented facilities but not too close I may support them.”

“Yes if it keeps graffiti away from other areas and keeps them graffiti free.”

"Makes the area look like an inner city slum."

"Providing a wall for people to graffiti is not dealing with the issue of it being an illegal activity. I would equate it to the absurdity of councillors picking up other people's litter on a regular basis. Also allowing people to paint freely on certain walls in the town could lead to there being more examples like the dreadful example that blights the wall next to the public toilets in Priory Road."

"These sort of things are normally only seen in inner city urban development and are not suitable for our rural countryside and they look horrible."

"We have a lot of Antisocial Behaviour in our area, and graffiti already on the hoardings next to Hillsong Church. It's started!! We do not want it to spread."

"A graffiti wall will not stop graffiti. It's done to be antisocial not as a piece of art for people to enjoy. It makes the area look so deprived."

"I answered yes, but it's yes with serious caveats - commission local artists to get the ball rolling on this wall and set a high standard that values skill and creativity.

Signage to make it clear what the wall is for helpful, as would having a webpage dedicated to displaying monthly photos of the wall's changing landscape. It'd also be good for everyone to know they can use the wall at any time but if they get in touch they can be credited on the webpage - therefore it becomes a portfolio opportunity for them. Basically, I think for best results some degree of active management is key."

"I'm not sure, depends where the walls are"

"In theory it sounds like a good idea. It just depends on where it is, how well it is painted and how it is maintained and/or refreshed"

"Graffiti is an act of vandalism and as such should not be encouraged. Street Art however is totally different and I would welcome considered street art"

"It does nothing for the high street or town it's anti social behaviour and needs to be stopped! we need more police patrolling the town. Youths just hanging about and messing about on there bikes doing wheelies on the footpath!"

"All graffiti should be stopped; any selective permission at any site would be seen as general encouragement and appeasement (appeasement or partial tolerance well just look at Hitler!)"

"i haven;t seen evidence (research) to know weather designating specific spaces to graffiti works. Surely this just moves the problem to another area of town."

"Complete waste of time, unless this can be manned at all times. People will not stick to the allocated wall, therefore it will not solve the problem at all in fact it will only exasperate it even more."

"Graffiti is unsightly and looks untidy, why should tax payers have to pay for this when money could be spent elsewhere."

"Not in the many historic and rural villages and towns. Other than that...I think graffiti walls can be very interesting...omitting foul language."

"graffiti has no place in our community and encouraging this scourge by having an approved wall is completely wrong"

5. If you have any further comments or have any ideas how we can tackle graffiti please give these below:

"Have a dedicated removal team who are proactive and remove within 24 hours of reporting"

"Heavier fines will help, Tonbridge has cameras everywhere"

"I would love to see a graffiti wall in Tonbridge, generally people tagging respect these and don't paint over them (e.g. Grovesner Park in Tunbridge Wells). More murals like the one in Barden would be good too. Perhaps tmbc could talk to businesses like Cook and CeX about getting some high quality street art on the side of their buildings? Could be gaming themed on CeX or food themed on Cook (as both these businesses have a problem with tagging on their side). If you do find a good central location for a main street art wall you should kick-start it by getting some respected local graffiti artists to help create it"

"Just leave it unless it is offensive"

"Catch and Prosecute the offenders"

"The fact that you are considering a graffiti wall is beyond me - spend the money on CCTV or perhaps sporting facilities. Glorifying the likes of Banksy in the media does not help this issue. It's graffiti not art and no one asked for it! What's next? a used chewing gum wall because a small minority of people think that's ok. TMBC get on with making positive changes not negative ones!"

"I don't think a graffiti wall will resolve the issue of increased graffiti as those who do it are mostly off their faces on drugs sold in the area."

"Remove it / paint over it all as soon as possible... if the graffiti artists see that it will be promptly removed then the cost of the paint is wasted. There is a lot alongside M20 between J4 and J5 and there is some on A228 in tunnel below A20."

"Need more people to clean it up when it is first spotted. As the more that is left up the more people will do it again and again. Need more CCTV."

"It's the tags on the green broadband boxes that is the worst- so pointless and looks awful."

"Some people think that it is art - I disagree - and believe it is criminal damage. Tonbridge like many towns locally and nationally which are blighted by the problem - there are so many eyesores in the town. The unfinished building on the corner of Avebury Avenue and River Lawn Road - the former Poundland store - and the former Beales site - graffiti only adds to the them."

"Graffiti is criminal damage. Treat it as such"

"Love a graffiti wall! Let's encourage creativity in our towns."

"Tagging awful. Good graffiti and planned street art can be amazing and should be promoted"

"It's unsightly and makes the area look rough. It needs clamping down on without glorifying it"

"Stiffer penalties for those found committing the offence of criminal damage by graffiti and educating young people through a schools programme as to the perils of causing graffiti in their locality."

"Police need to crackdown on those carrying it out, rapid clean up response to existing graffiti, better measures to tackle graffiti on third party land"

"CCTV in known spots to catch perpetrators and heavy fines"

"Get those serving community sentences to remove it."

"Have schedule to overpaint the wall every say two months to provide a blank canvas regularly, black, white, silver whatever, change it each time, and have the artwork documented for archive and to show on a website. There are loads of photographers in Tonbridge who would help out with that. Maybe an annual residents vote for the best artwork?"

"The Angel Centre being in the central location of Tonbridge is an ideal place to run an art and graffiti club"

“This is one of the areas of least concern for the local area and money should not be spent on this while other services are stripped back and assets sold off.”

“Public floggings. Taser. Or more usefully put the brats in chain gangs to litter pick in dresses and livestream on TikTok.”

“Personally I appreciate graffiti street art! There are some fantastic examples all over the world! It’s when it’s just a tag, randomly made, that it becomes annoying.”

“Put temporary cameras on the most blighted areas then you can find the people, show them on social media, identify them and then prosecute them or their parents”

“The graffiti all along the riverbank on the walls of Wharf House have been there for two years now, and nothing is being done. We had quite a bit of correspondence with Matt Broughton at the time, when he was the local councillor. At the time, he said that TMBC have a dedicated graffiti removal specialist, but they could not clean those because the building is privately owned. I hope that the owners are being actively pursued to get the job done, because the view along the river from Big Bridge is completely ruined!”

“Enforce sale restrictions, put police back on the streets to deter graffiti and other crime and give local kids something to do that keeps them busy and off the streets”

“There has been an awful lot of ugly graffiti on the wall of Wharf House by the river, for over two years now. Matt Broughton said two years ago that he was working on getting it removed, but nothing has happened. This graffiti is very obvious, and ugly, from Big Bridge - it makes our town look ugly, and it makes me ashamed.”

“Build more around the skate park and encourage them to graffiti the ground of the skate park(s) The SP in TW in Culverden is covered and it looks amazing.”

“It’s shocking in and around Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells etc. we moved in from Bromley over a year ago who seemed rigorous in their approach, it wasn’t noticeable at all. I’m very much in the camp that graffiti is a blot and a stain on the visual appearance of a community and the negative connotations it brings are unwarranted. More effort needs to be given to clear it away quickly every time, it shouldn’t be for residents to report what is clearly there for all to see before action is considered. More rigorous rectification and enforcement is needed.”

“Bromley have “street friends” people who are happy to hold a supply of council provided paint or graffiti removal kits to swiftly remove graffiti. When graffiti is swiftly removed it is less appealing to do. Prompt removal combined with a graffiti wall seems like a sensible balanced approach.”

“Some graffiti is actually very good. There are places in London and even France that have specific Graffiti safe walls. There are signs that clearly state its ok to spray there so there is no confusion. I think the community would rather not see it in or near the high street but local parks with lots of land is a great place to have a graffiti safe wall. Times are changing, as is the style of art, the things we wear, the electrical gadgets we use. We should embrace these changes but in the right way and by supplying graffiti walls to prevent damage to property and making the high street untidy.”

“Graffiti work shops are great I would like to see these run in leisure centres, it educates on the art of graffiti and teaches how to create stunning art work that can actually add to a community.”

“Regarding graffiti walls. If one were designated I think the council should try and lean into it, photographing and publicising the site to show its progression (or highlighting high quality work). This may generate a social/competitive element to the wall and focus graffiti efforts to that region.

As for graffiti around the area I have noticed a significant uptick in vandalism, littering and graffiti. Maybe there is potential to encourage community lead efforts to paint over vandalism similar to the litter picks currently organised by several groups? This would likely require more hands on effort by the council to interface between such a group and the affected property."

"We need to see street art installed at graffiti blackspots as generally tagging will not happen at locations with professional street art in place."

"Graffiti should be left alone, the more there is that is not removed, the more it is a testament to the failures in catching and prosecuting the perpetrators. There should only be efforts in enforcing the law and not providing any areas for this to be done legally. Graffiti artists should do this at home on their own property or on paper."

"Catch them in the act and make they pay for the cost of cleanup, put CCTV Camera aout if suitable."

"Street art on walls is much better than plain walls which just get tagged over and over again. It also brightens up dingy alley ways"

"One idea was to limit the sale of spray paints to teenagers. Another is more CCTV to catch them, then make them clean it off!"

"Trying to tackle this issue the same way as it has been in the past will not work. So why not flip it, work with graffiti artists, embrace them, offer collaborations with shops, leisure facilities, libraries, graffiti walls, get them to run workshops, teaching others their skills make them feel valued. Instead of saying no and excluding, how about saying yes and being inclusive, god knows we need some young, fresh creativity in this town, you never know Tonbridge may just have the next Banksy!"

"Support graffiti and positive additions / murals to buildings in the right location. Provide controls / enforcement where not. Ensure effective and proactive engagement with the community including schools"

"Policeman on the beat would help."

"Hopefully the result would be realistic artwork not just a lot of tag scrawls which mean nothing to anyone apart from the "artist"."

"Be really, really hot on actively eliminating graffiti from anywhere other than approved spaces. Unfortunately it's probably just going to take some money/ resource to resolve."

"Graffiti is an irrelevance. The council should concentrate on ameliorating the falling quality of life for many local residents and stopping the demise of local services."

"Please have the walls, the young people need something to do in their lives!"

"I'm concerned about the graffiti on M20 between junction 4-5. Surely they shouldn't be on the motorway and police should be fining and tackling the problem,"

"Maybe speak with the people doing the graffiti and let them cover some wall around snodland ask them cover up some dull looking walls / fences with some bright colours and that way we in snodland get to see there art and they the people doing the graffiti will fill as though they have done something worth looking at"

"I would like to see quality urban artists employed to teach the graffiti taggers the skills to make quality artworks on the graffiti walls that you are proposing. It maybe that later on when they are skilled they could be commissioned to produce artworks for the borough."

"The quicker and more frequently it is removed there becomes little point in the "artist" spending time and money on their work. They want to be seen."

"As with any antisocial behaviour and vandalism it is rife because there is a lack of police and consequences"

“can you not get criminal offenders to clean up the graffiti as part of their punishment /community service! set up cctv in most affected areas. River walk side of verdi gris always has kids being anti social and near the sainsbury's and by the CEX gaming shop alley way! Too much rubbish on the streets near takeaway fast food outlets!”

“Recurrent offenders need to be made to clean-off or overpaint any graffiti at their expense (time and cost)”

“A zero tolerance approach to graffiti would be better”

“Graffiti can, in certain circumstances (e.g. graffiti wall), be used to express and share an art form, however, it is unwelcome where the artists considers it their right to paint, draw, spray wherever they please. If it is illegal to deface public property, then it's wrong and the perpetrator should be penalised and have to pay for the clean up. I would enjoy seeing this art form where it is properly and, moreover, legally displayed.”

“I do not know if graffiti walls will eradicate the problem, as some people do not have respect for their surroundings. However it would be an opportunity for some to exhibit their skills.”

“Create spaces for creative young people. They are the future.

Graffiti does not kill people. Speeding traffic does. Get Banksi to sponsor the wall.”

“Artwork could be acceptable. If it is not offensive to anyone, has no political bias and is uplifting in content, aligned with the local area and popular opinions.”

“I think areas such as under bridges could be improved by allowing them to be used as a graffiti wall. No additional construction would be needed as the "wall" already exist to be used.”

“set up cameras in known hotspots and have regular patrols”.