Maidstone Joint Transportation Board





8 July 2020

Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP)

Decision Making Authority	Kent County Council/Maidstone Borough Council
Lead Director	Simon Jones
Lead Head of Service	Tim Read
Lead Officer and Report Author	Russell Boorman/Lee Burchill
Wards and County Divisions affected	Maidstone Borough including Tonbridge & Malling
Which Member(s) requested this report?	Committee

This report makes the following recommendations:

For Information. That this report be noted.

Timetable			
Meeting	Date		
Maidstone Joint Transportation Board	8 July 2020		

Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP)

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides an update in respect of the proposed junction improvements contained within the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP) and the completed "Keep Maidstone Moving" (KMM) consultation.
- 1.2 The contents of which have been taken from the 'Kent County Council, Keep Maidstone Moving Consultation' report which will be published separately and was prepared by an independent market research company "Lake Market Research".

2. THE CONSULTATION:

On the 29th January 2020 a six-week consultation was launched and ran until the 11th March. The consultation provided the opportunity for residents and other stakeholders to:

- see more detailed information on the proposals being put forward at each site, either via the consultation document as well as a number of consultation events;
- consider the layout, designs and facilities being proposed and their impacts and benefits;
- feedback on the proposals being presented.

The proposals presented in the consultation were:

- 1. A20 Coldharbour Roundabout
- 2. A229 Loose Road: Armstrong Road / Park Way
- 3. A229 Loose Road: Wheatsheaf junction
- 4. A229 Loose Road: Cripple Street / Boughton Lane
- 5. A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street
- 6. A274 Sutton Road junction with Willington Street

Consultees were asked to provide feedback on their agreement with the proposals outlined for each of those listed above and were given the opportunity to provide comments in their own words for each proposal.

As well as residents of Maidstone, the surrounding area and individuals who travel in and out of Maidstone regularly, the consultation also received feedback from:

- North Loose Residents Association
- Maidstone Action Group for Infrastructure Change
- PRPF Communications Limited
- Apollo Private Hire Ltd
- Nu Venture Coaches

- CPRE, the Countryside Charity Kent
- Bearsted & Thurnham Society

The proposals were presented at three face to face events via presentations and scheme plans detailed below. The events provided the opportunity to ask the team questions and to discuss the proposals in more detail.

- Saturday 8 February at The Tudor Park Marriott Hotel from 10am to 1pm
- Wednesday 12 February at The Village Hotel from 5:30pm to 8:30pm
- Monday 17 February at Sessions House from 1pm to 7pm

218 people attended the consultation events, there were 8,395 visits to KCC's website, and the consultation material was downloaded 14,279 times.

Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on the KCC website and in hard copy at the consultation events and libraries and via comment cards at the events.

A consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out to assess the impact these proposals could have on those with protected characteristics (race, age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief and carer's responsibilities). The EqIA was available as one of the consultation documents and the questionnaire invited respondents to comment on the assessment that had been carried out. The responses to the consultation will be used to review and update the EqIA, which will be considered along with the consultation responses before any final decision is made on any proposals.

CONSULTATION PROMOTION

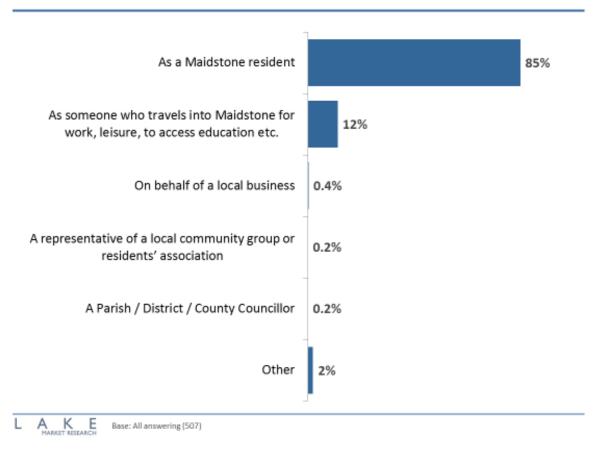
To raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, a thorough promotional campaign was carried out. This included:

- Postcard drop to residents and business in immediate vicinity of the schemes
- Email to stakeholders and partners
- E-mail invitation to those registered with the Consultation Directory who have expressed an interest in traffic, transport and roads
- Two press releases, the first on the launch of the consultation and a second two weeks before the end
- Roadside VMS signs
- Segment on KMTV's Kent Tonight programme
- Poster and postcards and copies of consultation document displayed in Maidstone libraries
- Advert in Parish Council newsletters

- Organic and paid for Facebooks posts
- Twitter and LinkedIn
- Banner on kent.gov homepage and roads and travel page
- Articles on KCC's internal staff communication channels

The consultation questionnaire asked consultees to indicate how they found out about the consultation. A range of means were used by consultees; however, the most common are social media (Facebook or Twitter) at 22% and a newspaper article. 18% referenced an 'other' means – this included digital road signage and word of mouth including the North Loose Residents Association and neighbouring residents / friends / family.

Capacity in completing the questionnaire



ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

It should be noted that a proportion of residents and stakeholders participated in the consultation rather than all residents of the area/stakeholders involved. The self-selecting nature of participating in the consultation should also be considered. People choose to take part as opposed to a representative sample of the population. The results are therefore subject to sampling error, which means that not all differences are statistically significant.

No weighting has been applied to the data received and all open questions were reviewed and coded into "themes" to provide quantitative analysist, alongside free text comments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KCC would like to thank all those who took the time to take part in the consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consultation Profile

538 people completed either the paper or online consultation questionnaire, or a comment card at one of the face to face public events held by KCC. The responses from all comment cards have been incorporated within each scheme's feedback and presented within the statistics in this report.

Of the 507 people who completed the consultation questionnaire and identified themselves, the majority are residents of Maidstone at 85%. The age profile of those answering is skewed towards an older age group compared to local area population statistics (although it should be noted that 21% did not identify their age in the questionnaire). The vast majority of consultees travel to and around Maidstone by private car (93%). Over half (51%) walk and 38% travel by bus. 14% travel by bicycle and 8% travel by taxi.

Response to the proposals are contrasting with low proportions using the 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'don't know' components of the agreement scales posed.

A20 Coldharbour Roundabout Proposals

- Equal proportions agree and disagree with the proposals 46% agree and 46% disagree. 37% strongly disagreed with the proposals.
- 45% of consultees answering made at least one positive comment on the proposals. Positive comments made include:
 - Agreeing with the removal of traffic lights
 - The need for dedicated filter / turning lanes
- 85% of consultees answering referenced at least one concern on the proposals.
 Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - Disagreeing with the removal of traffic lights
 - Perception of the proposals being unsafe / more dangerous

A229 Loose Road: Armstrong Road / Park Way (including Sheal's Crescent) Proposals

• A higher proportion agreed with the proposals at 55%; 42% disagreed. 26% strongly disagreed with the proposals.

- 48% of consultees answering made at least one positive comment on the proposals.
 Positive comments made include:
 - Improving traffic flow / easing congestion
 - The need for dedicated filter / turning lanes
 - Agreeing processes need to be made better for turning right
- 81% of consultees answering referenced at least one concern on the proposals.
 Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - Disagreeing with proposals concerning the lane no longer widening to two travelling north of the A229
 - Bus stop positioning

A229 Loose Road: Wheatsheaf Junction Proposals

- In contrast to the previous two proposals, disagreement with the proposals is significantly higher at 67%; 47% strongly disagree. 26% agree with the proposals.
- 26% of consultees answering made at least one positive comment on the proposals. Positive comments made include:
 - Agreeing with the closure of Cranborne Avenue
 - Improving traffic flow / easing congestion
- 93% of consultees answering referenced at least one concern on the proposals. Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - Disagreeing with the closure of Cranborne Avenue
 - Perceptions congestion will merely move further away and those wanting to turn right will be an issue / creating tailbacks
 - Preference to not lose the pub
- Response to the two landscape options reflects the high level of disagreement with the proposals overall. Half (50%) indicated they did not like either option. Just under a quarter (23%) indicated they did not have a preference out of the two landscape options.

- Option 2 achieved a higher proportion selecting it at 16% but this proportion is low in comparison to the proportion who do not like either option.
- The most common concern raised with the two landscape options presented is a perception the bench area would not be utilised, as no-one would want to sit between traffic lanes nor surrounded by pollution.

A229 Loose Road: Cripple Street / Boughton Lane Proposals

- A higher proportion disagree with the proposals at 52% compared to the proportion agreeing (32%). Just over a third (35%) strongly disagreed with the proposals.
- 25% of consultees answering made at least one positive comment on the proposals. Positive comments made include:
 - The proposals being an improvement to the current layout / structure
 - Improving traffic flow / easing congestion
- 88% of consultees referenced at least one concern on the proposals. Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - o Perceptions the turn into Boughton Lane isn't an issue
 - Pedestrian crossing changes
 - Cripple Street junction / turning being an issue / needs improving.

A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street Proposals

- A marginally higher proportion disagree with the proposals at 49%, compared to the proportion agreeing (40%). 32% strongly disagreed with the proposals.
- 42% of consultees made at least one positive comment on the proposals. Positive comments made include:
 - The proposals being an improvement to the current layout / structure
 - o Agreement the number of lanes should be increased
 - Perceptions of improving traffic flow / easing congestion
- 88% of consultees referenced at least one concern on the proposals. Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - Perceptions congestion issues are caused by vehicles turning right into Willington Street

o Perceptions two lanes for going straight on are not needed

A274 Sutton Road junction with Willington Street Proposals

- A significantly higher proportion disagreed with the proposals at 52%, compared to the proportion agreeing (30%). 39% strongly disagreed with the proposals.
- 22% of consultees made at least one positive comment on the proposals. Positive comments made include:
 - An improvement to the current layout / structure
 - Perceptions of improving traffic flow / easing congestion
- 87% of consultees referenced at least one concern on the proposals. Concerns raised include:
 - The proposals not improving matters / causing more congestion
 - Perceptions proposals do not go far enough / are short term and traffic would only get worse in the future.
- Response to the two landscape options reflects the high level of disagreement with the proposals overall. 35% indicated they did not like either option and 35% indicated they did not have a preference out of the two options.
- Of those remaining, preference for the options is broadly equal. The most common concern raised refer a preference for not losing trees / wildlife habitats.

CONSULTATION PROFILE

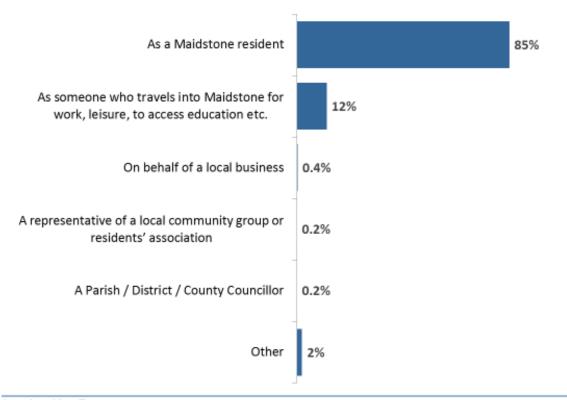
In total, 538 people completed either the paper or online consultation questionnaire or a comment card at one of the face to face public events. Of the 507 people who completed the consultation questionnaire and identified themselves, the majority are residents of Maidstone at 85%. There is also representation from other stakeholder groups.

Focusing specifically on the profile of Maidstone residents or those who travel through Maidstone, we can see that both gender groups are represented. The age profile is skewed towards an older age group compared to local area population statistics (although it should be noted that 21% did not identify their age in the questionnaire).

5% indicated they are disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010. 43% of those who indicated they are disabled have a physical impairment and 35% indicated they have a long-standing illness or health condition; 22% have a sensory impairment and 22% have a mental health condition.

The majority indicated they are White British (67%). 29% preferred not to disclose this information.

Capacity in completing the questionnaire



A K E MARKET RESEARCH Base: All answering (507)

Resident / travel through Maidstone profile

Residents of Maidstone/someone who travels to Maidstone for work/leisure/education only

Male	46%
Female	33%
Prefer not to say / not answered	21%
Age	
24 and under	1%
25 – 34	9%
35 – 49	18%
50 – 59	17%
60 – 64	8%
65 and over	34%
Prefer not to say / not answered	21%

Prefer not to say / not answered	21%
Carer	
Yes	8%
No	69%
Prefer not to say / not answered	23%

Ethnicity	
White English	67%
White Irish	1%
White Other	2%
Asian	0.2%
Black or Black British	0.2%
Prefer not to say / not answered	29%

Disabled as set out in Equality Act 2010	
Yes	5%
No	73%
Prefer not to say / not answered	22%

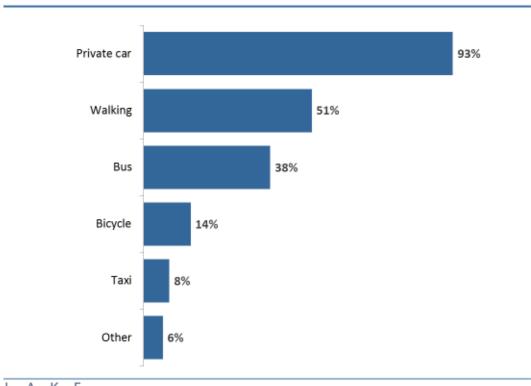
Type of impairment applies for those answering yes *		
Physical impairment	43%	
Long standing illness or health condition	35%	
Sensory impairment	22%	
Mental health condition	22%	
Learning disability	4%	



* Please note consultees could select more than one type of impairment

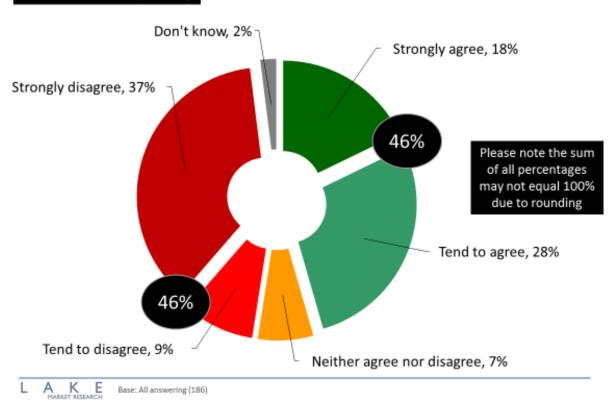
The vast majority indicated they travel to and around Maidstone by private car (93%). Over half (51%) walk and 38% travel by bus. 14% travel by bicycle and 8% travel by taxi.

Method of travel in to and around Maidstone



Agreement with A20 Coldharbour Roundabout proposals

186 Consultees responding



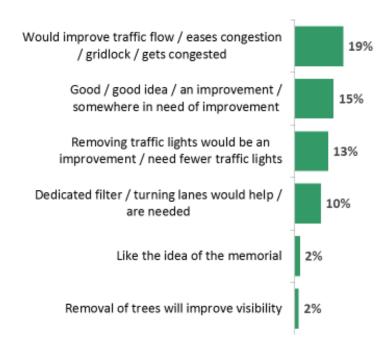
Subgroup significant differences:

Whilst base sizes are relatively low, there are significant differences in response as follows:

- A significantly higher proportion of consultees aged up to 49 **agree** with the proposals 59% of 46 consultees in this age group;
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 50 to 64 **agree** with the proposals 38% of 50 consultees in this age group.

Positive comments made on A20 Coldharbour Roundabout proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 45% of consultees made at least one positive comment

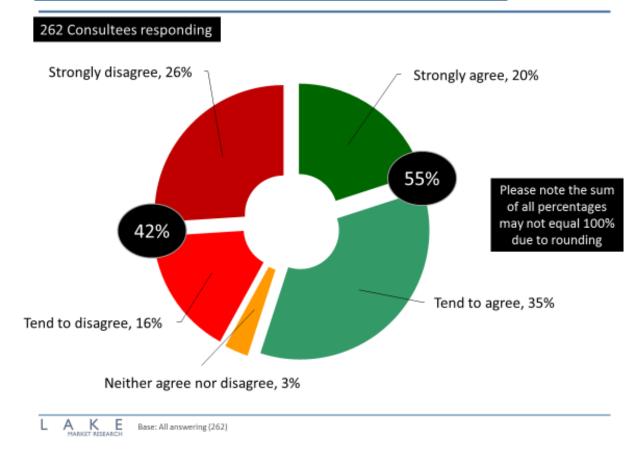


L A K E Base: All answering (183)

85% of consultees commenting <u>raised at least one concern</u> on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals wouldn't improve matters / make things worse / cause more congestion –
 31%
- Do not agree with the removal of traffic lights / should reinstate traffic lights 28%
- Perceptions of being unsafe / more dangerous / causing more accidents 20%
- A preference to keep the verges / trees / flowers 14%
- Need to increase the number of lanes / widen lanes 13%
- The proposals would encourage speeding and speed restrictions need to be considered –
 11%

Agreement with Armstrong Road / Park Way proposals



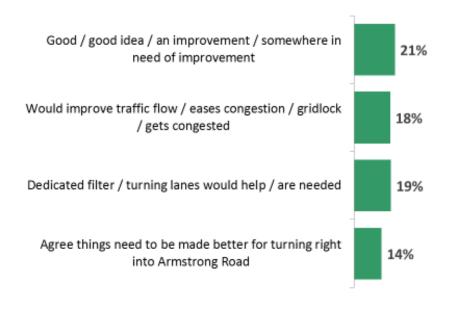
Subgroup significant differences:

Whilst base sizes are relatively low, there are significant differences in response as follows:

- A significantly higher proportion of consultees aged up to 49 **strongly agreed** with the proposals 31% of 68 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 50 to 64 **strongly agreed** with the proposals 17% of 66 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 65 and over **strongly agreed** with the proposals 15% of 71 consultees in this age group.

Positive comments made on Armstrong Road / Park Way proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 48% of consultees made at least one positive comment



L A K E Base: All answering (251)

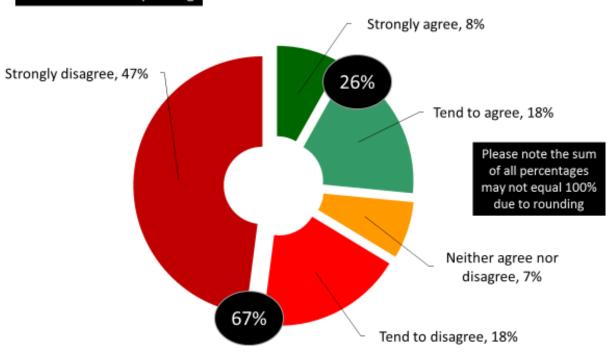
81% of consultees commenting <u>raised at least one concern</u> on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals wouldn't improve matters / make things worse / cause more congestion –
 37%
- Need to increase the number of lanes / one lane isn't enough 16%; Don't like the
 merging / reduction of two lanes into one 12%; both referencing the proposals
 concerning the lane no longer widening to two travelling north on the A229

The retention of bus stops will cause problems / hold ups and needs a pull-in particularly in single line traffic-14%

Agreement with Wheatsheaf junction proposals

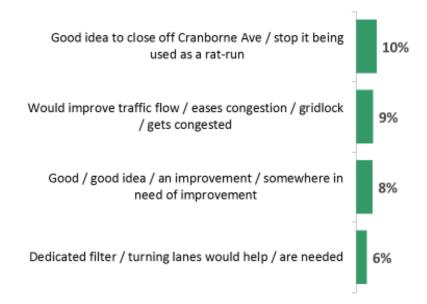
351 Consultees responding



A K E Base: All answering (351)

Positive comments made on Wheatsheaf junction proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 26% of consultees made at least one positive comment

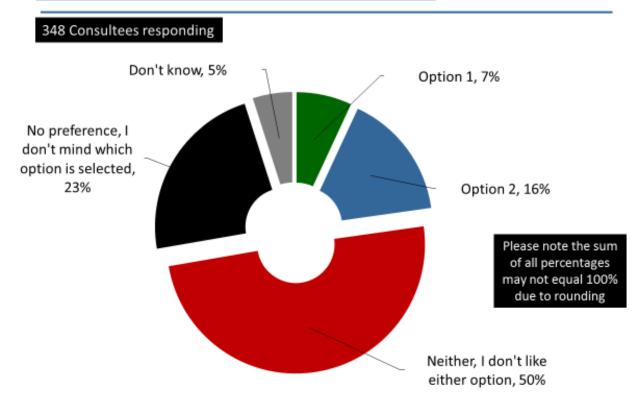


93% of consultees commenting <u>raised at least one concern</u> on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals wouldn't improve matters / make things worse / cause more congestion –
 47%
- Disagreement with the closure of Cranborne Avenue / would make access to the A229 difficult – 22%
- Perceptions the proposals will move the congestion further away / down the road 21%
- Perceptions turning right will be a problem / will create tailbacks / filter lane is too short –
 20%
- Do not want to lose the pub 17%
- Concerns the proposals are unsafe / will cause accidents 11%
- Perceptions traffic lights are needed at Plains Avenue 11%

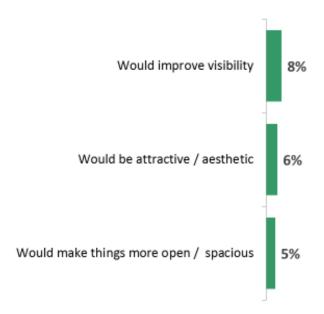
In addition to the proposals specifically, consultees refer to housing development (12%), the perceptions of the proposals being a waste of money (11%).

Preference for Wheatsheaf junction landscape



Positive comments made on Wheatsheaf junction landscape options

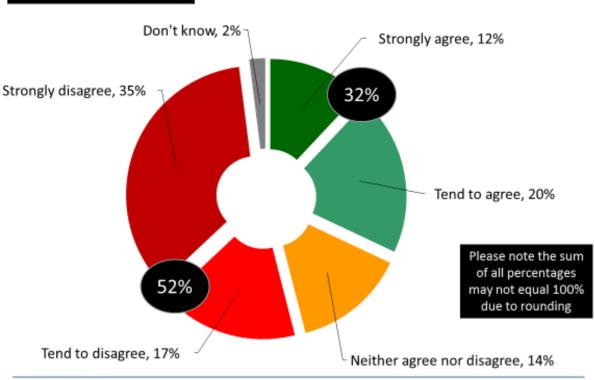
POSITIVES (NET) - 17% of consultees made at least one positive comment



L A K E Base: All answering (277)

Agreement with Cripple Street / Boughton Lane proposals

186 Consultees responding



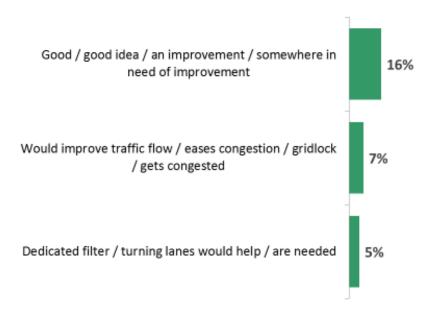
<u>Subgroup significant differences:</u>

Whilst base sizes are relatively low, there are significant differences in response as follows:

- A significantly higher proportion of consultees aged up to 49 **agree** with the proposals 46% of 50 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 50 to 64 **agree** with the proposals 30% of 56 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 65 and over agree with the proposals
 28% of 69 consultees in this age group.

Positive comments made on Cripple Street / Boughton Lane proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 25% of consultees made at least one positive comment



L A K E Base: All answering (195)

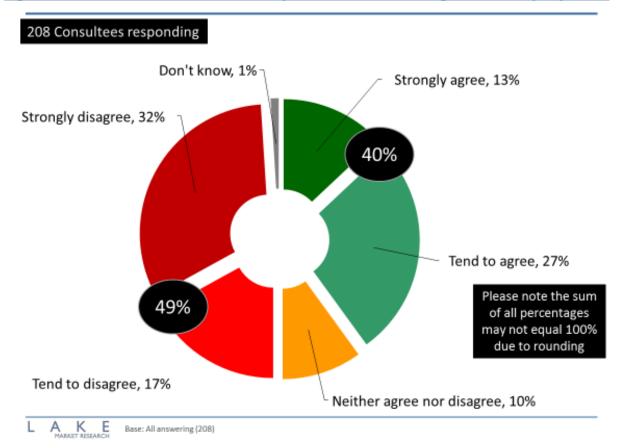
88% of consultees commenting <u>raised at least one concern</u> on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals wouldn't improve matters / make things worse / cause more congestion –
 26%
- Perceptions the turn into Boughton Lane isn't an issue / the proposal is unnecessary –
 20%
- Need to think about pedestrians more / do not agree with changes to crossings 18%

- Perceptions the Cripple Street junction / turning is an issue / needs improving 12%
- Perceptions the traffic lights need changing / better phasing / synchronising 12%
- The retention of bus stops will cause problems / and will need to be re-sited as suggested in the plans – 12%
- Perceptions the Farrows junction is difficult / need improving / the filter lane is too short
 10%.

In addition to the proposals specifically, Consultees refer to housing development (12%), and the need to encourage cycling (10%).

Agreement with A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street proposals



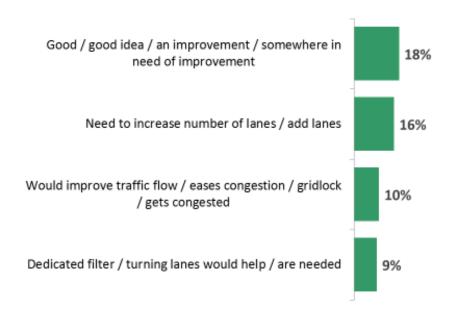
Subgroup significant differences:

Whilst base sizes are relatively low, there are significant differences in response as follows:

- A significantly higher proportion of consultees aged 65 and over agree with the proposals
 51% of 57 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged 50 to 64 **agree** with the proposals 355% of 57 consultees in this age group.
- A significantly lower proportion of consultees aged up to 49 **agree** with the proposals 41% of 56 consultees in this age group.

Positive comments made on A20 Ashford Road with Willington Street proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 42% of consultees made at least one positive comment



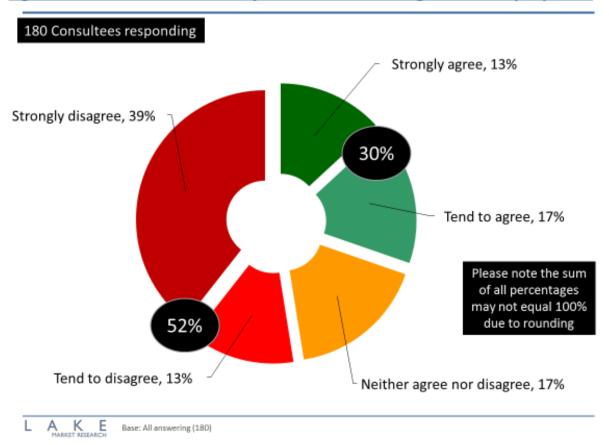
L A K E Base: All answering (177)

86% of consultees commenting <u>raised at least one concern</u> on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals wouldn't improve matters / make things worse / cause more congestion –
 33%
- Perceptions that congestion issues are caused by vehicles turning right into Willington
 Street and this needs addressing 18%
- Perceptions two lanes going straight on aren't needed / two lanes needed for turning right – 13%
- Perceptions of needing a ring road/more bridges 11%
- Perceptions traffic will only get worse in the future 11%

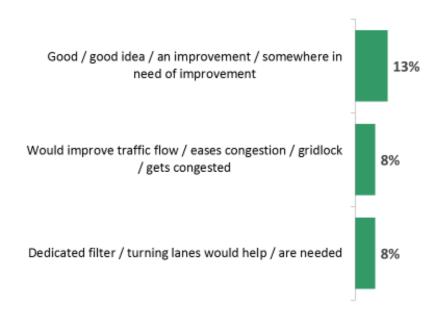
In addition to the proposals specifically, consultees refer to housing development (14%), and preferences for a bypass (11%).

Agreement with A274 Sutton junction with Willington Street proposals



Positive comments on A274 Sutton junction with Willington Street proposals

POSITIVES (NET) - 22% of consultees made at least one positive comment

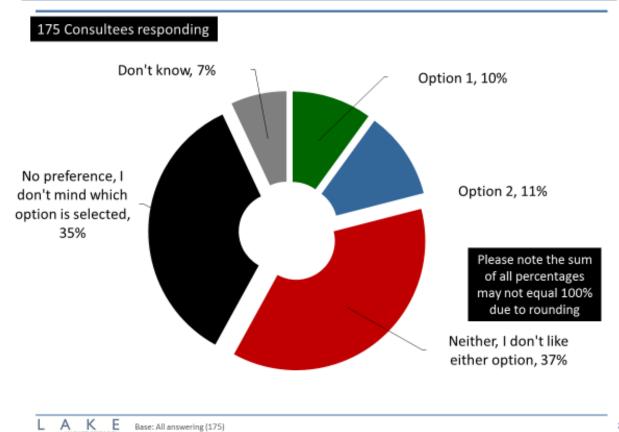


87% of consultees commenting raised at least one concern on the proposals. A number of concerns were referenced but the most common are as follows:

- The proposals would be of no benefit / doesn't address the issue / cause congestion –
 32%
- Perceptions the proposals don't go far enough / a short term solution / quick fix 18%
- Perceptions traffic will only get worse in the future 16%
- A preference to keep the verges / flowers / trees 14%
- Perceptions proposals are a waste of money / the cost exceeds the benefits / money could be better spent – 14%
- Perceptions of needing a ring road/more bridges 13%

In addition to the proposals specifically, consultees refer to housing development (17%), and preferences for a bypass (16%).

Preference for A274 Sutton junction with Willington Street landscape



Overall comments on approach to reducing congestion

Consultees were then asked to provide comments on KCC's approach to reducing congestion in Maidstone. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed consultees comments and

27

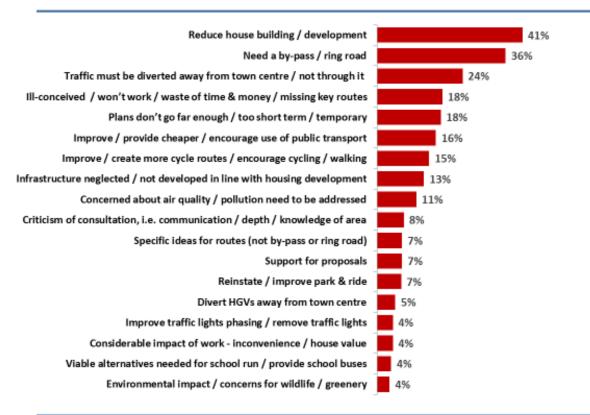
have grouped common responses together into themes. A number of consultees made comments relating to more than one theme and this is evident in the percentages reported for each theme in the chart below.

The majority of comments made did not reference the consultation proposals specifically. Just over four in ten (41%) commented there is a need to reduce house building / development in the area because of its impact on congestion. 36% referenced a need for approval of a bypass / ring road and 24% commented that there needs to be a focus on diverting traffic away from the town centre / not through it.

Comments concerning the proposals specifically focus on consultees concerns with regards to perceptions of them being a waste of money (18%) and not going far enough / too short term (18%). Open comments made supporting the proposals are relatively low at 7%.

Improvement and promotion of alternative / more sustainable means of transport, i.e. public transport, cycling and walking, is also referenced as an area of improvement (16% public transport, 15% cycling / walking).

Comments on approach to reducing congestion in Maidstone



3 CONCLUSION:

- 3.1 The **'Keep Maidstone Moving'** consultation document was designed to provide feedback from members of the public and stakeholders alike in relation to the junction improvements that have been brought to the MJTB on previous occasions.
- 3.2 Although significant promotion of the events, notwithstanding concerns raised in terms of the leaflet distribution, there was a low response to the consultation and numbers of residents to the engagement events reduced during the period with the initial session receiving the highest number of attendees at 108.
- 3.3 There is also a concern that although residents have been walked through the benefits of the schemes, there is still a scepticism regarding the results of the modelling work carried out, which drives these junction improvements in terms of securing the funding but also the design compatibility for that particular junction.
- 3.4 Percentages of disagreement to the schemes seem high, but in the majority are in terms of a feeling that what is proposed will not work/deliver the benefits it sets out to do so.
- 3.5 There is also a feeling that further development should not be allowed and a 'ring road/more bridges' are required to deliver significant benefits to congestion within the town.
- 3.6 The closure of Cranbourne Avenue was highlighted as a concern due to the feeling there would be a negative impact on this and surround roads with the distribution of traffic.
- 3.7 Landscaping at the 'Wheatsheaf' was dismissed, yet this actively seeks to improve/enhance the area and provide further mitigation to noise and air pollution.
- 3.8 This package of schemes has always been a divisive and controversial set of proposals, that mitigate the impact of the development in the Borough. There are a number of constraints on each site that cannot be overcome predominately due to the funding/land constraints.
- 3.9 It has been widely reported at previous JTB's that bold decisions form Members must be taken to deliver this package of schemes that will provide an overall benefit across the Borough and not just at the isolated junctions.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 4.1 Although the consultation results appear to be negative, it is the recommendation of officers to proceed with the proposals; however, these results the following will be addressed:
- 4.2 An alternative solution to the 'Wheatsheaf' junction has already been designed and will be communicated to the Local Member for their comment, this does still require the closure of Cranbourne Avenue. Additional cycling facilities, such as bicycle parking is also being investigated at the site of the Wheatsheaf pub to promote more sustainable cycling and walking.
- 4.3 Further engagement sessions will be carried out when Government Guidance allows with more specific/targeted audiences to further demonstrate the benefits.
- 4.4 Work has been carried out to understand the impact of the closure of Cranbourne Avenue in terms of traffic distribution and this will be communicated to Local Members for their comment.
- 4.5 It is recommended that the A274 Sutton Road junction with Willington Street improvement is not taken any further until such times that an alternative can be found that satisfies the requirements of providing capacity improvements and having a low impact on the surrounding vegetation.

- 4.6 It is further recommended that an alternative solution to the A229 Loose Road junction with Cripple Street/Boughton Lane is sought to address the concerns raised by residents. This has been the most difficult of all the junctions to address due to the existing layout and land constraints.
- 4.7 Further consultation will be carried out in relation to the relocation of the Ragstone Wall on the A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street as requested by Maidstone Borough Council.

5 COVID-19

- 5.1 Members must note that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the delivery of the programme of schemes. It has impeded the ability to undertake relevant surveys on the Public House and carry out assessments as required.
- 5.2 Unfortunately, there is a risk that the funding may be removed by Government due to the Global Pandemic, albeit all these schemes have had a Business Case approved by an independent technical evaluator. This has been raised at SELEP and an answer is being awaited.
- 5.3 KCC are continuing to progress the designs based on the recommendations above and further updates will be sent to JTB Members following any announcements of funding.
- 5.4 Therefore, the delivery programme has been altered accordingly with a revised timeframe that would see the commencement of the construction phase in 2021.