



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26 June 2020

Cllr Michael Payne
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, and Member for Tonbridge Division
Kent County Council
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
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ME14 1XQ

Dear Michael,

As you know, earlier this month I ran a Walking, Cycling and Safer Roads Survey across Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Malling. This survey was designed for residents to feed in their ideas about measures which Kent County Council (KCC), as the local highways authority, could consider as part of the funding provided by Government through the Emergency Active Travel Fund last month.

The survey has received an overwhelming response and in advance of KCC making its final decisions, should it be allocated the money in full, I wanted to share with you some of the results. I am very happy to provide further detail on a town by town, and village by village basis if necessary.

The survey had four main parts, asking about 20mph speed limits, better cycle paths and facilities, the pedestrianisation of High Streets in Tonbridge, Edenbridge, West Malling and Borough Green, and the need for wider pavements with more people using them.

In total, I received more than a thousand responses and I have spent much of the past few days looking through each and every one which was received, and the ideas suggested. It is clear that many good ideas have come forward and, sadly, not every one can be progressed. I am aware that the funding must be spent across the whole of Kent but I trust that the recognition that particular ideas will be popular across Tonbridge, Edenbridge and Malling would help your decision making.

Starting with the extension of 20mph speed limits, over 83% of respondents indicated that this is something which they would support. While there was some concern around enforcement, which is a matter for Kent Police, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of residents support such a scheme. I am delighted that as part of the initial allocation, KCC has suggested Tonbridge as an area where this could be rolled out. Indeed, in Tonbridge town over 90% of respondents were in favour of 20mph speed limits and if this can be introduced, I know that it will be welcomed by so many.

I asked respondents which roads they considered appropriate for 20mph speed limits and, as could be expected, I had hundreds of roads mentioned. One particular theme which came out through the responses is the need for a blanket 20mph speed limit on roads surrounding schools, where there are greater number of children walking to and from school, especially in urban areas. I would be grateful if KCC could look towards extending the 20mph limit around all schools to ensure the safety of everyone travelling to and from school.

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

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Like the extension of 20mph speed limits, increasing and improving cycling facilities was extremely popular, with over 90% of people supporting these measures. I am pleased that route audits are being conducted to inform the new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan as it is clear that measures to improve cycling will be welcome.

One theme which came out in the response to this question is the need to improve cycling in and around the area of West Malling station, especially on the A228 connecting it with Leybourne, East Malling and West Malling. There are a number of potential routes in and around these communities which could be explored using this funding, and I trust that KCC will be able to look at this.

Since this funding was announced some people have suggested that pedestrianising our local High Streets was one way which we could ensure that social distancing is maintained. As a result, I opted to seek views on the support for pedestrianisation on four of our larger High Streets, at Tonbridge, Edenbridge, West Malling and Borough Green. It was clear from the results that there was very minimal and limited support for pedestrianisation in West Malling, Borough Green and Edenbridge.

In Tonbridge, there were more people in favour but not a clear majority of respondents. Indeed what was clear from the comments from many people is that the concerns with this were because of the impact of traffic on Cannon Lane, and also the potential for additional rat running across residential areas at either end of the High Street. While it is clear that some people do support it, there was no majority for it based on the hundreds of Tonbridge residents who responded to my survey.

Finally, there was a majority of people, over 60%, in favour of wider pavements in both town and village centres. Many pointed to the works on Tonbridge High Street as a good example of this, creating a more pleasant pedestrian environment while supporting local businesses. What was notable from this result was how much higher this figure was in Edenbridge than elsewhere, with residents making the point very clearly that the pavements in Edenbridge High Street were unsuitable with the existing issues around parking and speeding on the High Street. I would strongly encourage KCC to work with Sevenoaks District Council to make sure that improvements are always put in place to maintain the safety of pedestrians on Edenbridge High Street.

I trust that this letter is helpful and I will happily share further details of the results of my survey with you. I would be grateful if you were able to include as many schemes to address the issues which are most popular with residents within your final proposals.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT