
A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme

Public Consultation Report

Executive summary

This Consultation Report provides a summary of the public consultation undertaken by Kent County Council (KCC) on the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme. The consultation took place over a five-week period between 15 September and 19 October 2020.

Through this consultation KCC presented the proposed improvements to the A229 Blue Bell Hill (referred to as Blue Bell Hill going forward), in the form of three options.

Details of the proposal were available in several locations:

- to view and download from the KCC Consultation Directory
- to view and download from the Virtual Consultation Hub
- requests for hard copies of the consultation material could be made through the available phone number and email address

Many members of the public participated in the consultation, a few key indicators of this include:

- the consultation documents were downloaded from the Consultation Directory a total of 12,249 times
- the Virtual Consultation Hub was viewed 6,798 times
- KCC issued 47 hard copy versions of the consultation materials

In total, KCC received 359 responses to the feedback questionnaire, and a further eight that were sent via the project mailbox in a questionnaire or letter format. This consultation report presents this feedback, shares common themes between the feedback and provides a response to each of these themes.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of document

This consultation report has been prepared by AECOM to provide a record of the public consultation undertaken by Kent County Council (KCC) on the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme throughout September and October 2020. The consultation period commenced at 11:00am on Tuesday 15 September and concluded at 11:59pm Monday 19 October.

This document brings together all engagement materials produced for raising awareness of the consultation and provides a summary of all feedback received during the consultation.

This consultation report will feed into the next stage of the funding bid process and project development.

1.2 Background

KCC consulted the community, road users and other stakeholders on proposed road improvements as part of the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme. Blue Bell Hill is a section of dual carriageway which runs between Junction 6 of the M20 in Maidstone and Junction 3 of the M2 at Blue Bell Hill village. See Figure 1 for the site location.

The dual carriageway is a key link between Maidstone and Medway and provides the shortest route between the M2 and M20.



Figure 1: Site Location

Road users of Blue Bell Hill often experience high volumes of traffic which result in significant congestion issues and concerns about road safety. These congestion issues are likely to be made worse by future housing developments in the surrounding area and the new Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), which will both generate additional traffic.

KCC proposed three options for improvement to address these issues. They involved a range of different improvement and rearranging works to the roundabouts and junctions, as identified in Figure 2.

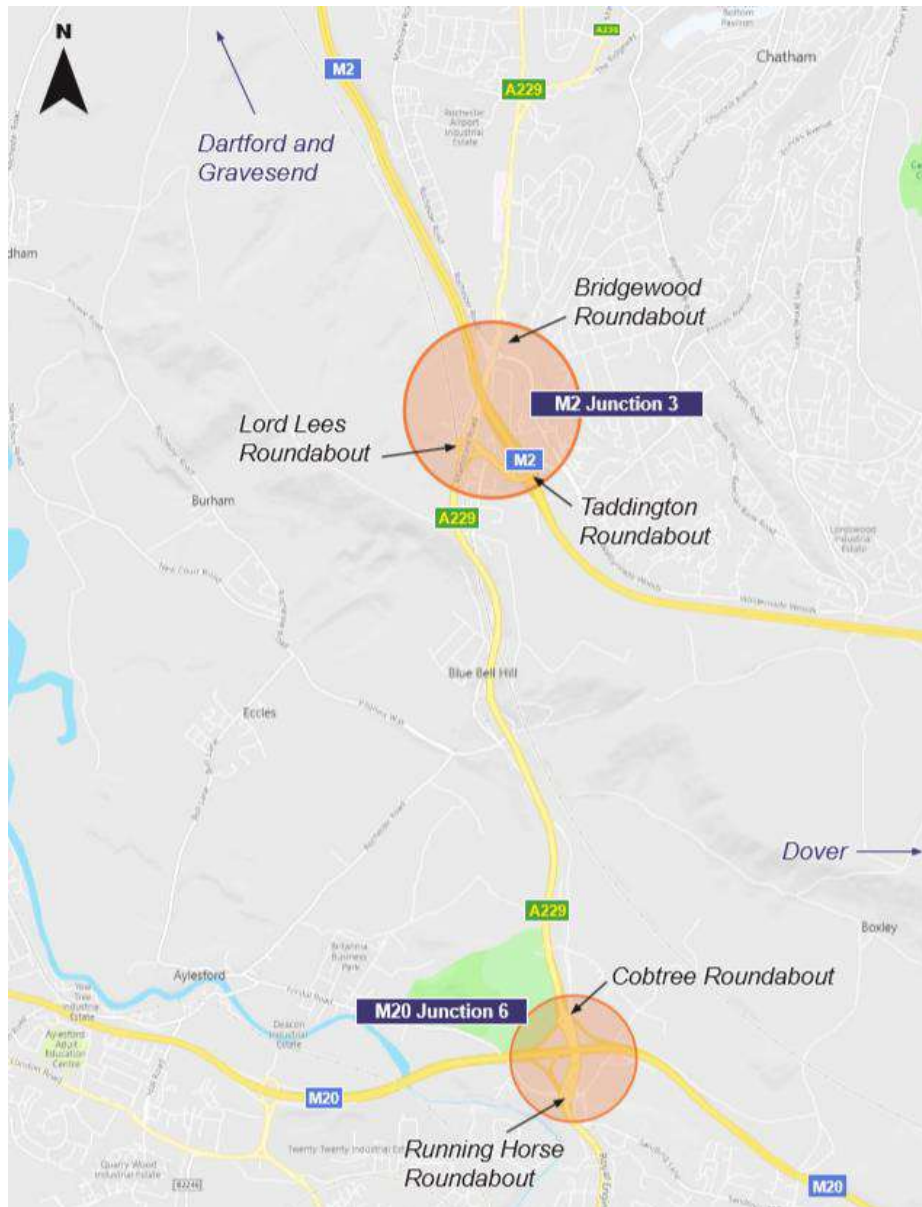


Figure 2: Plan showing location of proposals

The project aims to improve the current and predicted traffic issues at the two following affected junctions:

- **the M2 Junction 3:** which is comprised of the Taddington and Lord Lees Roundabouts, providing access to the Walderslade area via the A2045 from the Bridgewood Roundabout.
- **the M20 Junction 6:** which is comprised of the Cobtree Roundabout and the Running Horse Roundabout.

1.3 Project aims

The overall aim of the scheme is to improve journey time reliability and road safety. This will allow the road to accommodate an increase in future traffic, expected as a result of the LTC and proposed local developments, while providing suitable routes and facilities for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.

1.4 Project objectives

The aim of the scheme is supported by objectives that have been developed to address the challenges that were identified through a review of the current and future road predictions. These are:

- to improve journey time reliability at M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges of the A229
- to reduce congestion along the route
- to enable the local area to develop in accordance with population and housing growth predicted under Local Plans
- to reduce the impacts of additional traffic from the Lower Thames Crossing and allow LTC to maximise potential benefits it can provide for the Kent area
- to improve road safety and address known accident hotspots
- to make best use of existing infrastructure assets including land and highways
- to provide suitable routes and facilities for public transport
- to provide safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists
- to improve air quality in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- to protect and enhance the local environment

1.5 Stage and purpose of the consultation

This consultation took place at an early stage in the project and had two purposes:

- to explain why the scheme is necessary and share early design options with residents, stakeholders and the travelling public
- to provide an opportunity to seek feedback on these options and the scheme as a whole

Feedback from this consultation will help determine which option should be progressed or if a combination of works from across each of the options should be taken forward instead.

1.6 Refinement of the design options

KCC have worked with stakeholders to identify all possible solutions to achieve the scheme aims and narrow them down to three options. Selection and refinement of the options took place through two workshops.

Attendees at the workshops included:

- KCC staff
- Specialist consultants from AECOM
- Highways England representatives
- Lower Thames Crossing representatives
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Medway Council representatives

This involved an initial ideas generation workshop in June 2020 to develop a range of possible works that could be used within options. This was followed by another workshop in August to develop some of these options.

These options were carried through to a refinement process where they were assessed against criteria including acceptability, cost, demand and feasibility. It also involved the use of traffic modelling to determine the potential impact of each option to traffic levels. From this assessment, the changes that performed best were combined into three options which were taken forward to public consultation.

The three chosen options each involve a range of improvements and rearranging works to the roundabouts at the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges. Table 1 below outlines the proposed changes for all three options.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Northern end of Blue Bell Hill			
Improvements to the slip road onto the A229 southbound at Lord Lees Roundabout	✓	✓	✓
Increase the road width between Taddington and Lord Lees Roundabouts to four lanes	✓		
A new slip road onto the M2 (westbound) from the A229 immediately after Lord Lees Roundabout	✓	✓	✓
Upgrade of the current signalised junction at Taddington Roundabout allowing traffic travelling from the M2 eastbound to A229 via a new bridge over the M2	✓		
A new separate left turn lane from the M2 westbound to the A229 at Taddington Roundabout	✓	✓	✓
A new slip road from the M2 eastbound to a new junction arrangement at Bridgewood Roundabout		✓	✓
Southern end of Blue Bell Hill			
Enlarge the Running Horse Roundabout to the west	✓	✓	
Improve the slip road onto the M20 eastbound from Cobtree Roundabout	✓	✓	
A new grade separated junction, where the existing Forstal Road bridge is currently located			✓
Along the length of the A229 Blue Bell Hill			
Widen the A229 to three lanes when travelling southbound towards Maidstone (between Lord Lees and Cobtree Roundabouts)	✓	✓	✓

Table 1: Outline of the proposed changes to the roundabouts at the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges.

1.7 Project timeline

The project timeline is subject to change as the scheme develops and are driven by the requirements of the Major Road Network funding, set by the Department for Transport (DfT). The aim is for construction of the scheme to start in Summer 2024, to allow it to be completed before the LTC opens to traffic in 2027.

October to December 2020

- analysis of consultation feedback and work to prepare for the next stage of the funding bid process

December 2020 to March 2021

- next stage of the funding bid process due to be submitted to the DfT
- publish consultation report

Summer 2021

- announcement of preferred option for the scheme

Spring 2022

- prepare to make applications for the relevant consents for the scheme

Spring 2022 to Summer 2023

- further detailed design work and public consultation

Spring 2023

- submission of full business case to the DfT

Summer 2024

- construction works to start on site

2027 (or before)

- completion of the scheme (in advance of the opening of the LTC Scheme)

1.8 Decision making process

This consultation report and the feedback will be taken into consideration as part of a review of the options and the process for determining a preferred option. It will be used to support the development of a number of assessments including the Environmental Assessment and the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

2.0 The consultation process

This section of the consultation report outlines the communication and engagement processes selected and the documentation produced to support the delivery of the consultation.

2.1 Aim of consultation

The aim of the consultation from the outset was to facilitate a high quality and accessible consultation on the A229 Bluebell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme.

This was achieved through careful selection of the tools and channels of communication, in order to match the demographics of the area. The central hub for all consultation materials was the [Consultation Directory](#) but was also supported by a variety of other means in which the public could contact KCC and the project team.

However, it must be noted that, as the consultation period took place throughout September and October 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the tools and channels of communication had to also meet the guidelines of social distancing. Therefore, for this consultation, KCC replaced all in-person events with a Virtual Consultation Hub, which could be accessed through the Consultation Directory.

To ensure the consultation remained as accessible as possible, this was supported by other means to contact the project team, such as a phone number, email address and details of where to mail any letters or questionnaires to.

2.2 Consultation activities

Consultation Directory

All consultation material was available through the Consultation Directory (www.kent.gov.uk/a229bluebellhill), where it could be viewed or downloaded. KCC had high download numbers which reflect a strong level of engagement with the consultation (please see table 4 on page 23 for a record of these download figures).

Virtual Consultation Hub

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions including two-metre social distancing have provided a challenge for holding in-person events. The guidelines around the UK lockdown were carefully considered and KCC took this opportunity to develop a virtual public exhibition to mitigate the impact of not being able to do in-person events. This meant that the consultation, and all associated activity, remained within the social distancing guidelines.

The Virtual Consultation Hub was accessible through the Consultation Directory where all of the accompanying material was hosted.



Figure 3: Image of the virtual consultation

Like an in-person event, the Virtual Consultation Hub hosted various consultation materials which detailed the plans for the scheme. Each of these are detailed below.

Pop-up message

Once a consultee accessed the Consultation Hub, they saw a pop-up message welcoming them to the consultation, this included:

- specific instructions on how to navigate the room in the virtual environment

- contact details for requesting alternative formats (if the consultee was not comfortable with the virtual environment)
- contact details for the project team for any other questions

A second pop up message then informed the consultee that the site collected analytical cookies to provide KCC with anonymous statistics and provided an opportunity for them to accept or reject the collection of cookies.

Introduction video

Following this an introductory video played automatically. This was a two-minute video delivered by Michael Payne, KCC's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport which provided a brief introduction, overview and aims of the scheme and highlighted that KCC was seeking the public's feedback through this consultation and indicated the consultation period.

The consultee could then navigate around the room, in a clockwise direction, to each exhibition board with detailed information on the scheme. Each exhibition board, when selected, had several functions available including:

- automatically playing an audible version of the boards
- the ability to zoom in and out
- the option to download the board as a PDF document

In the centre of the virtual exhibition room was a large table, where the consultation brochure, option drawings and FAQs were available.

Consultation brochure

The consultation brochure outlines the details of the context of the project, work to date, options for consultation and next steps.

Option drawings

Three option drawings were presented, showing the changes involved with each proposed improvement.

Frequently Asked Questions

The FAQ's set out answers to 22 key questions about the scheme under the following topics:

- consultation and feedback
- scheme overview and aims
- the three design options
- funding and next steps

Questionnaire

Following the final information board, the consultee was presented with the opportunity to submit feedback through a 'Have your say' button. Once clicked, they were directed to the online questionnaire on KCC's website. Hard copies of the questionnaire were also available upon request, through the project contact details. All feedback received via email and letter during the consultation period were accepted as part of the consultation feedback and analysed alongside the responses to the questionnaire.

2.3 Stakeholder audience

Given the nature and location of the scheme, there were many stakeholder groups outlined for this consultation. A detailed stakeholder matrix was produced to ensure all relevant stakeholders were captured and received the communication and engagement materials. The stakeholders that have been identified have been grouped into the following:

- local residents
- affected landowners
- road users
- local business community
- residents' associations
- equality and diversity stakeholders

- leisure groups which use the Bluebell Hill vicinity
- local MPs and Councillors
- Neighbourhood Planning Groups
- environmental interest groups
- adjacent local authorities
- government bodies, such as Highways England

2.4 Equality and accessibility considerations

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out on the proposals put forward in the consultation, which informed the methods/approaches for the consultation. The EqIA was published on the Consultation Directory.

To ensure the consultation was accessible to as many people as possible, the following activities were carried out:

- consultees could request alternative formats and hard copies of all consultation material. Hard copies of the promotional postcards were sent to residents and businesses located near the scheme
- KCC provided a dedicated answering machine service where people could call to ask questions and request information on the project which were sent out
- there was a dedicated project email address where questions and comments could be sent
- the consultation brochure, all exhibition boards, FAQs, EqIA and questionnaire were all available on the Consultation Directory in accessible Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF formats
- within the Virtual Consultation Hub, each board had the option for audio dialogue so that consultees had the opportunity to listen to the information if required

2.4 Publicising the consultation

The consultation was publicised through a broad variety of methods (both online and in hard copy) in order to reach the widest audience possible.

Stakeholder emails

An email was sent to stakeholder organisations informing them of the consultation, how to access it and how to provide feedback.

An email alert was issued to 3,059 registered users of the Consultation Directory who had expressed an interest of being kept informed of consultations on the topic of road, traffic and transport.

Social media activity

KCC and Medway Council shared information about the consultation on their social media channels to increase awareness and engagement.

KCC has a significant presence on three social media channels, which are as follows:

Social Media Channel	Link
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/KentCountyCouncil
Twitter	https://twitter.com/Kent_cc
LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/kent-county-council/

Table 2: KCC social media presence and links

In total, the posts were seen 32,814 times on KCC’s social media channels. They reached 14,046 people and generated 1,087 clicks to the Consultation Directory. Examples of the 11 organic posts shared during the consultation period can be seen in figure 4 below.

Posts were also shared via paid Facebook advertising, targeting people who live within 20km of Maidstone. These were seen 1,359,061 times, reached 271,668 people and generated 502 clicks to the Consultation Directory.



Figure 4a: Example of the social media advertisement for the consultation



Figure 4b: Example of the social media advertisement for the consultation



Figure 4c: Example of the social media advertisement for the consultation

Posters

Advertising posters were sent to 17 venues, including local community village halls, hotels, sports clubs and councils. See Table 3 for a full list of the venues the posters were sent to.

Venue	Address
Mickey's Diner	Old Chatham Rd, Blue Bell Hill, Aylesford ME20 7EZ
Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course	Chatham Rd, Sandling, Maidstone ME14 3AZ
The Lower Bell Public House	201 Chatham Rd, Blue Bell Hill, Aylesford ME20 7EF
Hook Meadow Community Centre	King George Rd, Walderslade, Chatham ME5 0TZ
Maidstone United Football Club	Gallagher Stadium, James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1LQ
Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club	Hall Rd, Aylesford ME20 7DS
Bridgewood Day Nursery	429 Maidstone Rd, Blue Bell Hill, Chatham ME5 9RX

Premier Inn Maidstone Town Centre Hotel	5-11 London Rd, Maidstone, ME16 8HR
Scania Maidstone	Chatham Rd, Brooklyn Park, Maidstone ME14 3AA
Travelodge Maidstone Central	St Peter's St, Maidstone, ME16 0SR
Village Hotel Maidstone	Village Hotel Maidstone, Castle View, Forstal Road, ME14 3AQ
Walderslade Baptist Church	Catkin Close, Chatham, Kent, ME5 9HP

Table 3: Full list of venues that the advertising posters were sent to

The posters were A4 and provided information on what the consultation was about and how to take part, as well as providing contact details. See Figure 5 for a copy of the consultation poster.



Figure 5: Consultation poster

Postcards

Postcards were delivered to 6,219 addresses in the immediate vicinity of the scheme. The postcards were A5 and provided details of the consultation including what is being consulted on and how to take part. See Figure 6 below for a copy of the double-sided postcard.



For any alternative formats, please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service number 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

Figure 6: Double sided postcard delivered to residents

Press release

A press release was issued by KCC on the first day of the public consultation period (15 September 2020) to further raise awareness of the consultation. A copy of the press release is available at the following link:

www.kccmediahub.net/junction-improvement-consultation-for-blue-bell-hill745

The consultation also featured in the resident e-newsletter that was published on 8 October 2020, which was issued to 1,364 subscribers.

Newspaper articles

During the consultation there were three articles regarding the proposals that KCC were consulting on. Two of these were on news websites and the other was in a local paper:

Kent Online Maidstone – published 8 October 2020: [“Maidstone Borough Council warns plans for dual carriageway over Blue Bell Hill could 'cut into' protected countryside”](#)

Kent Online Medway – published 18 September 2020: [“Blue Bell Hill junction upgrades proposed for A229 at M2 junction 3 for Medway and M20 junction 6 for Maidstone in £142m scheme by Kent County Council”](#)

Maidstone Kent Messenger – published 29 September 2020: [“Major £142m roads scheme”](#). The newspaper article included images of the proposed options and information about the purpose of the consultation. See Figure 7 for an image of the newspaper coverage.



Figure 7: Image of the newspaper coverage in the Maidstone Kent Messenger on Tuesday 29 September

Roadside Variable Message Signs (VMS) and temporary signs

Temporary road signs, shown in Figure 8, were displayed on the A229 northbound, just past the access road to the Cobtree Manor Golf Course to target regular users of the road and encourage them to visit KCC's website to take part in the consultation.



Figure 8: Example of the temporary road signs displayed on the local roads.

VMS located on the local roads in Maidstone, shown in Figure 9, also displayed messaging to target stakeholders that regularly use the road.



Figure 9: Image of the VMS taken on Forstal Road by Cobtree Manor Park with the sign visible for traffic travelling towards the Running Horse Roundabout.

KCC internal staff communications

An article was published on the homepage of KCC's intranet during the consultation period to provide details on how to find out more and take part in the consultation.

Website updates

The consultation was promoted on the Kent.gov.uk website throughout the consultation period, which included information about the purpose of the consultation and how to access the Virtual Consultation Hub.

2.5 Engagement with the consultation

Consultation Directory downloads

All of the consultation boards and accompanying documents were downloadable in a Microsoft Word and a PDF version. Table 4 outlines the number of downloads each item received.

Consultation document	Downloads
Consultation Brochure - Word version	343
Consultation Brochure - PDF version	1992
Scheme Plan: Option 1 - PDF version	3658
Scheme Plan: Option 2 - PDF version	1583
Scheme Plan: Option 3 - PDF version	1400
Board 1 - Introduction - Word version	103
Board 1 - Introduction - PDF version	214
Board 2 - Reasons for the scheme - Word version	57
Board 2 - Reasons for the scheme - PDF version	167
Board 3 - Scheme Objectives - Word version	41
Board 3 - Scheme Objectives - PDF version	109
Board 4 - Design Proposals and Option 1 - Word version	176
Board 4 - Design Proposals and Option 1 - PDF version	745
Board 5 - Option 2 - Word version	89
Board 5 - Option 2 - PDF version	350
Board 6 - Option 3 - Word version	64
Board 6 - Option 3 - PDF version	269
Board 7 - Environmental Impact - Word version	32
Board 7 - Environmental Impact - PDF version	152
Board 8 - Next Steps - Word version	38
Board 8 - Next Steps - PDF version	103
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - Word version	49
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - PDF version	166
Equality Impact Assessment - Word Version	19
Equality Impact Assessment - PDF Version	57
Postcard - PDF version	152

Consultation questionnaire - Word version	80
Consultation Privacy Notice - Word Version	15
Consultation Privacy Notice - PDF Version	26
Total	12,249

Table 1: A breakdown of all consultation documentation downloads

Email

KCC had a dedicated email inbox (A229bluebellhill@kent.gov.uk) for any queries or questions related to the consultation. In total, KCC received 148 emails to the mailbox.

Figure 10 below outlines the email correspondence during the consultation period.

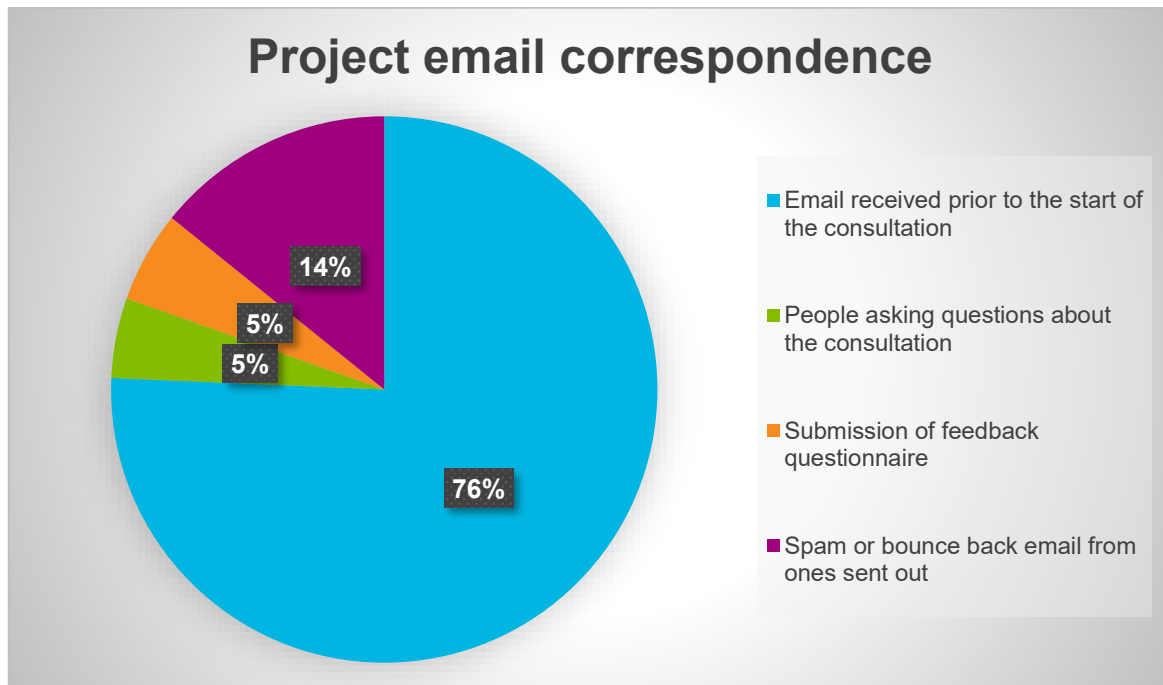


Figure 10: The breakdown of project email correspondence

Of the 148 emails received, the majority (76%) were received prior to the consultation going live. This was due to the postcard being distributed a week before the consultation launched. The rest were all received during the consultation period with eight of them providing feedback questionnaires.

Phone

In addition to the project email, KCC also had a dedicated phone number (03000 42 14 37), which went through to an answer phone. A breakdown of messages is provided in Figure 11. In total, KCC received 46 calls.

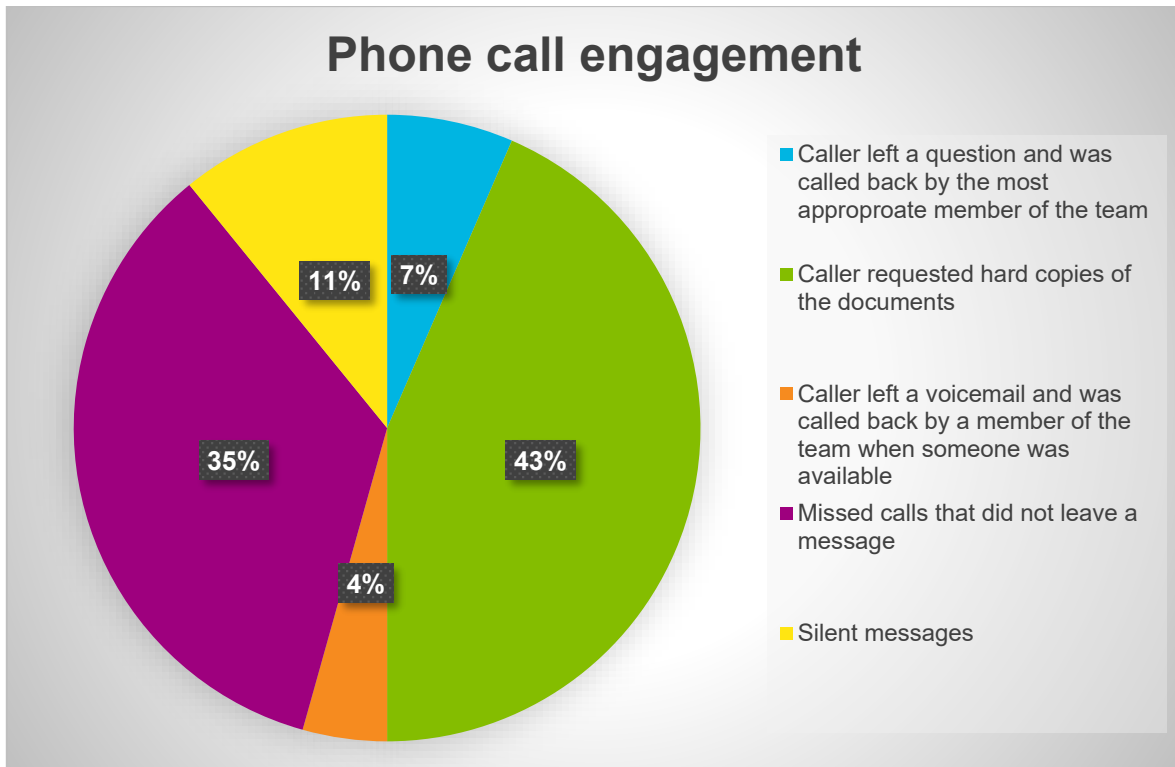


Figure 11: Phone calls KCC received

In the instance that the caller left a voicemail and a contact number was left (2 calls or 4%), their call was returned by a member of the team. Where the caller left a question (3 calls or 7%), they were called back by the most appropriate member of the team. Of the 46 calls, 20 (43%) were requests for hard copies of the consultation documents which were sent out. 16 (35%) were missed calls that did not leave a message and 5 calls (11%) were silent messages.

Virtual Consultation Hub

Table 5 shows the page views and unique visitors to the Virtual Consultation Hub broken down by week across the entire consultation period. It shows that the first and last week of the consultation had the greatest number of unique visitors to the page with 630 views and 230 views, respectively.

Week	Date	Unique visitors	Page views
		The number of unique visits (new users)	Total number of pages view (repeated views of a single page is counted)
Week 1	15 to 21 September	630	3,664

Week 2	22 to 28 September	150	160
Week 3	29 September to 5 October	115	125
Week 4	6 to 12 October	156	373
Week 5	13 to 19 October	230	2,476
Total	15 September to 19 October	1,281	6,798

Table 2: The total page views and unique visitors to the Virtual Consultation Hub

3.0 Consultation feedback and analysis

Summary of feedback on project and options

Section 1 analysis

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

- Section 1 – About You
- Section 2 – The Scheme
- Section 3 – The Consultation
- Section 4 – More About You

The sections consisted of closed and open questions to encourage the respondent to provide further detail on their answers if desired.

Figure 12 outlines the response to the first question of the feedback questionnaire which provides information on the capacity in which the respondent was completing the questionnaire and therefore breaks down the audience. It shows that 62% (219) of the 359 respondents are Kent residents and will be providing answers from the perspective of the local community. This was followed by residents from other areas, such as Medway Council who made up 30% (108) of the answers.

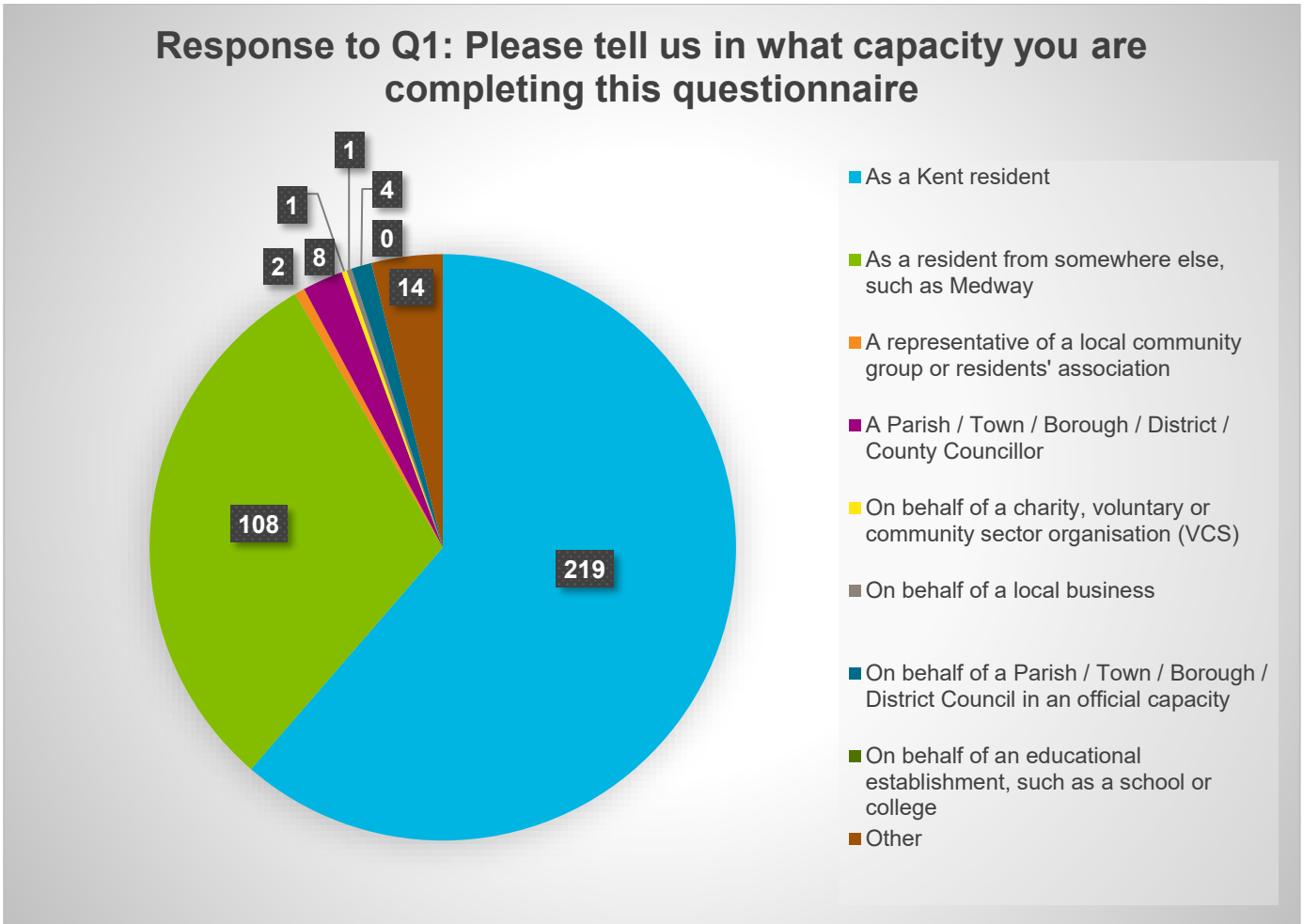


Figure 12: Response to question 1 ‘Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this questionnaire’

14 of those who responded selected the ‘Other’ option. Further information demonstrated that these represent one former Kent resident, one resident who overlooks the M2, one who is a resident in Walderslade Woods, and the remainder are those living in or close to Blue Bell Hill village.

16 respondents selected the ‘a representative of a local community group or residents’ associations. These included:

- Aylesford Parish Council
- Boxley Parish Council
- Buckmore Park Karting Ltd
- Frindsbury Extra Parish Council

- L Brown Associates Ltd
- Maidstone Borough Councillor for North Ward and Boxley Parish Councillor for Woodlands Ward
- Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum
- Shorne Parish Council
- Medway Liberal Democrats
- Medway Council
- The British Horse Society
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Postcode information

The respondents were asked to provide the first five characters of their postcode to help KCC better understand the distribution of those participating. 354 of the 359 (98%) respondents provided their postcode and in total, there were 141 different postcodes, demonstrating that the consultation reached a broad audience.

90 (25%) of the postcodes had just one or two participants, which in many cases represented commuters who used the road, but most questionnaires were received from those in ME5 (27%), which is expected as this is where Blue Bell Hill village and the residential area to the west of Taddington Roundabout at M2 J3 are located, ME14 covering the M20 J6 and Sandling (18%), ME15 (5%), DA1 (4%) and ME20 (4%).

Travelling through Blue Bell Hill

Question 3 enquired as to what mode of transport they use on the A229 Blue Bell Hill.

Figure 13 below outlines the response to this question. It shows that the most frequently used method of transport on the A229 Blue Bell Hill is private car, which 203 drivers and 27 passengers use five or more times a week.

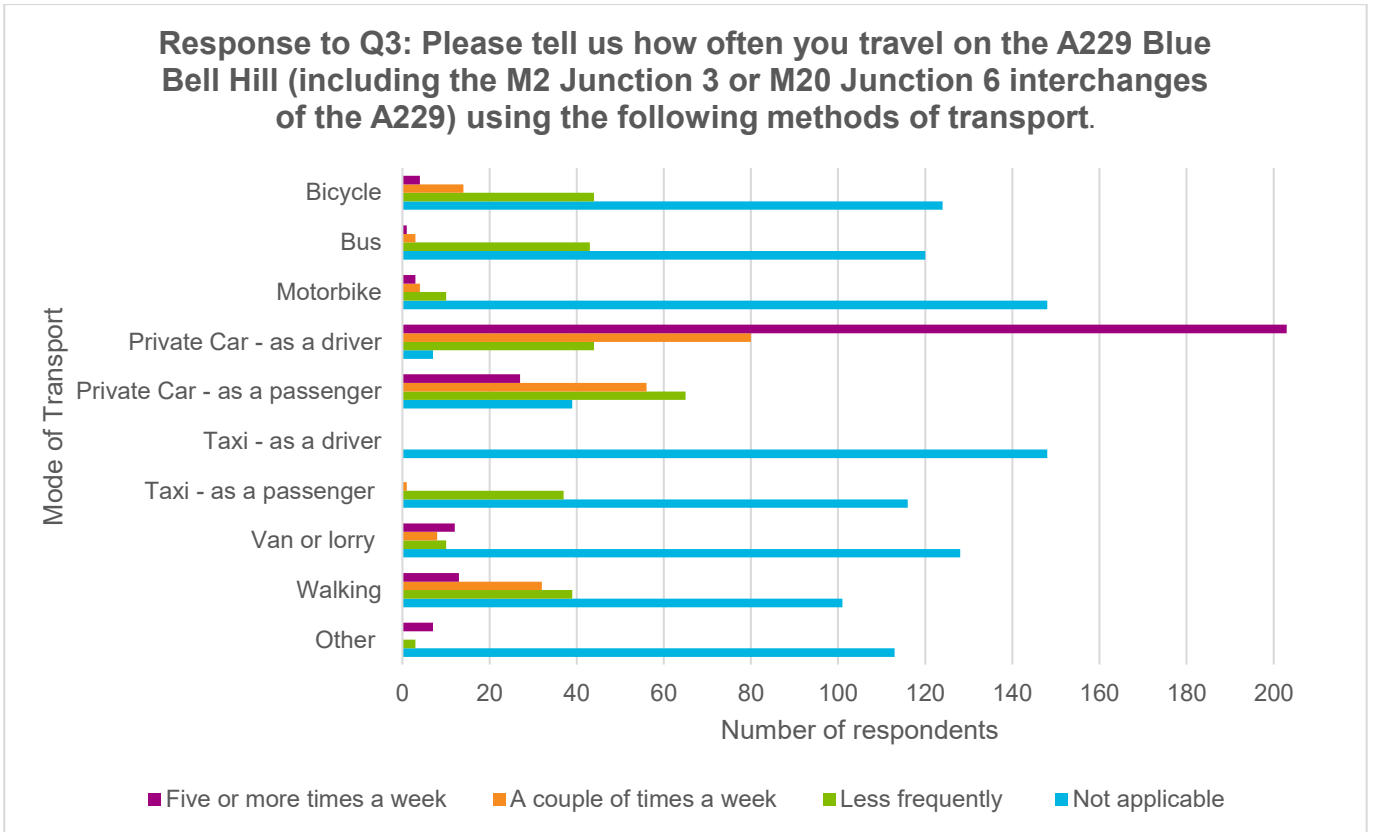


Figure 13: Response to the question ‘Please tell us how often you travel on the A229 Blue Bell Hill (including the M2 Junction 3 or M20 Junction 6 interchanges of the A229) using the following methods of transport.’

With exception to travelling as a driver by taxi, all other methods are shown to be used five or more times a week, or a couple of times a week, highlighting that the improvements to Blue Bell Hill must accommodate all transportation methods.

Of the 83 respondents that travelled as a passenger in a private car either five or more times a week, or a couple of times a week, 54 (65%) of respondents selected either strongly agree or tend to agree when asked asking to what extent they agree or disagree that improvements are required to Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges. Of the 20 people that selected they travelled by van either five or more times a week, or a couple of times a week, 19 (95%) selected strongly agree or tend to agree for this question. The one responded who selected ‘tend to disagree’ for this question did not expand on their answer.

Of the 62 respondents that travel by bicycle, 48 selected either strongly agree or tend to agree to question 4 asking to what extent they agree or disagree that improvements are required to Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges.

Most of their concerns focused on the increase in traffic and the implications this will have in terms of safety.

Of the 84 respondents to who confirmed that they travel by walking, 61 (73%) also selected either strongly agree or tend to agree to this question asking to what extent they agree or disagree that improvements are required to Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges. As with those who use a bicycle, the main concern is the increased traffic and congestion around the roundabouts and junctions.

17 of the respondents selected they travel by motorbike and all highlighted that they either strongly agree or tended to agree with improvements based on concerns around the safety of entering and exiting the local residential estates, the congestion at the roundabouts and the increased in noise and air pollution.

Section 2 analysis

Section 2 of the questionnaire asked the respondent for their views on the scheme. The information below provides a breakdown of each question.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that improvements are required to the A229 Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges?

All respondents answered this question and demonstrated that the majority of those who participated in the consultation (85%) supported the proposals and selected either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree’. Table 6 below provides the responses.

Response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree	241	67.5
Tend to agree	65	18.2
Neither agree nor disagree	15	4.2
Tend to disagree	14	3.9
Strongly disagree	22	6.2
Don't know	0	0

Table 6: Breakdown of responses to question 4 in the feedback questionnaire

Question 4a: Please tell us the reason for your answer to Q4.

344 respondents expanded on their reasoning for their answer to question 4. The answers demonstrated a variety of different issues including congestion, safety and pollution. Examples of the responses that were received for each option are provided in table 7.

Common theme	Project team response
Strongly agree	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is required to improve congestion / volume of traffic, particularly at peak times – 80 (33%) • Required for road safety / reducing accidents – 42 (17%) • Rush hour traffic at the Taddington Roundabout is very bad and often becomes gridlocked – 29 (12%) • Increase in traffic has causes build ups in the local areas / roads – 24 (10%) • The Running Horse Roundabout is dangerous as it is significantly busy at peak times – 17 (7%) • Timing / phasing of the traffic lights is very quick which worsens congestion – 16 (7%) • Roundabout causing significant delays – 15 (6%) • Important to ensure good traffic flow – 7 (3%) • Needed to reduce the bottleneck at peak times – 6 (2%) • The scheme will help improve journey times – 4 (2%) • The traffic brings noise pollution that impacts local residents 3 (1%) • Combat environmental issues including air quality – 2 (1%) 	<p>The analysis of existing and forecast traffic conditions further supports the issues raised by the public through feedback around congestion, especially in the peak hours.</p> <p>The project team are aware of and recognise issues around safety, congestion and traffic flow.</p> <p>The team is aiming to address these through this improvement scheme. Further information will be provided to the public as designs progress.</p>

Tend to agree	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will help to improve traffic along the road and junctions – 18 (36%) • Help improve congestion at peak times – 11 (22%) • Will alleviate the need to wait in queues when traffic is bad, and people are waiting to exit at junctions – 10 (20%) • It will help reduce the number of road accidents taking place – 6 (12%) • Will help improve ‘unnecessary’ delays to journey times – 3 (6%) • Require a slip road at the Walderslade Road to prevent a gridlock situation when accidents occur – 1 (2%) • Current road is not suitable for the amount of traffic – 1 (2%) 	<p>Further work on design and development of simulation models / junction assessments will be needed to assess more specific issues such as access to / from local roads, ‘weaving’ and any specific safety issues will be reviewed as part of the design process.</p> <p>This further modelling and assessment will be undertaken in due course and shared at the next public consultation on this scheme.</p>
Neither agree nor disagree	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be done with the interest of local residents in mind – 4 (31%) • It will cause an increase in traffic and congestions – 3 (23%) • Improvements will cause more disruption than leaving the roads as they are – 2 (15%) • Environmental considerations need to be further reviewed, including landscape, biodiversity and air and water quality – 2 (15%) • Unable to make a choice based on the information provided – 1 (8%) • The design encourages people ‘take chances’ when entering the roundabout – 1 (8%) 	<p>Impacts during construction will be taken into account in later stages of the project development and we will also provide an update in the next public consultation.</p> <p>We plan to run a full variable demand model of the preferred option that is taken forward and developed. This will take into account the potential for disruption elsewhere on the network and the impacts this will have on the local communities.</p> <p>More detailed environmental studies will be carried out in the next stage of the project.</p>
Tend to disagree	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More road space will lead to more traffic – 3 (23%) 	<p>The locations to make changes have been identified based on traffic surveys and</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apart from at peak times, the road functions well – 3 (23%) • Need to consider managing the attractiveness of road space and directly replacing it with better public transport, including significantly improved walking and cycling facilities – 3 (23%) • Data does not take into account the change in road usage caused by the increase in people working from home and the impact of Brexit – 3 (23%) • The existing on/off systems on either side of the M2 were poorly designed, increasing complexity unnecessarily and causing bottlenecks as a result – 1 (3.5%) • It is better to reduce speed on Bluebell Hill up and down to allow better traffic integration and design longer slip roads for integration onto the A229 and slow speed down on Chatham Road (going up from the Lower Bell pub crossroads) – 1 (3.5%) 	<p>modelling of future conditions. Some comments referred to the design and layout of other junctions, such as the M2 Junction 4, which is outside the scope of this scheme</p> <p>Impacts will be modelled compared to not implementing the scheme, including traffic levels, noise and air quality.</p> <p>There are already existing bus services, and the options will take into account the requirements to maintain and improve these services as the designs are further developed.</p> <p>We will take into account driver behaviour and how this relates to traffic levels, routing and safety as we look to update the proposals.</p> <p>Following detailed air quality and noise modelling, appropriate mitigation measures will be devised to ensure no significant air quality of noise pollution because of the scheme, and improvements where possible.</p> <p>The enforcement of speed limits will rest with the appropriate authorities who we will liaise with later in the design process to ensure the appropriate speed limits are in place for the forecast traffic levels. As well as forecasting the likely traffic impacts (e.g. level of traffic and route choices) the scheme will also consider safety implications in both the design and in the further assessment / appraisal of the scheme.</p>
<p>Strongly Disagree</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plans will make traffic and delays even worse – 6 (32%) • The plans will have negative impacts on the environment including air quality and biodiversity – 4 (22%) • No changes are required – 2 (10%) • The plans would result in longer journey times as congestion will be worse – 2 (10%) • Previous improvements have had negative impacts on traffic – 1 (5%) 	<p>Noise and air quality impacts are being assessed as part of ongoing work, including any statutory responsibilities and the need for appropriate mitigation to lessen the impact to those living closest to the proposed improvements. This information will be shared with the public once available.</p> <p>Further modelling will be needed on the preferred option(s) to determine the potential for increased traffic.</p> <p>KCC are responsible for the overall transport strategy for Kent, including promoting public transport and promoting behaviour change. However, a large proportion of traffic on the</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will have a negative impact on local residents whose properties back onto the road – 1 (5%) • Introducing a bypass would be cheaper and a better use of money – 1 (5%) • The proposals do not address ‘single occupant’ motor vehicles – 1 (5%) • More focus needs to be had on public transport and discouraging ‘unnecessary travel’ – 1 (5%) 	<p>A229 is strategic and originates from outside of the county (including traffic from Lower Thames Crossing once constructed), over which KCC has less influence.</p>
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Table 7: Example comments from question 4a in the feedback questionnaire

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the objectives for the scheme?

The respondents were asked to review the objectives and how much they agreed or disagreed with them. They were also provided with an opportunity to expand on their response and give more detail. Examples of these comments are provided in the table below.

Objective 1: To improve journey time reliability at M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges of the A229

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 211 (59%) • Tend to agree: 80 (23%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 20 (6%) • Tend to disagree: 14 (4%) • Strongly disagree: 27 (8%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality needs to be a key consideration when developing the proposals and designing the scheme • There will be a positive impact on journey times for HGV and other service delivery providers • Concern for increase of accidents for option 1 and 2 	<p>The assessment of the options includes an appraisal of journey times for different vehicle types (including HGVs). Specific issues at junctions will require more detailed / local modelling in future work.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't know: 0 (0%) 		
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Objective 2: To reduce congestion along the route

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree: 250 (70%) Tend to agree: 50 (14%) Neither agree nor disagree: 19 (6%) Tend to disagree: 13 (4%) Strongly disagree: 21 (6%) Don't know: 0 (0%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most rush hour traffic congestion in Medway and Maidstone is linked to a 25-year history of giving bus and taxi vehicles exclusive use of key roads / lanes Need to consider delay times during construction Filter lanes are a "great idea" to help alleviate congestion It will increase lane capacity on link to A229 and directs traffic from M2 without having to use roundabout Concern about congestion between Taddington and Lord Lees Roundabouts 	<p>KCC and the relevant district / borough authorities have developed and consulted on a number of Local Plans and transport strategies over the years to develop a multi-modal transport network that caters for all needs as far as practicable whilst taking into account impacts on congestion, the local economy and the environment. Traffic levels and allocation of road space for all users are reviewed as part of KCC's responsibilities and as part of the Local Plan process.</p> <p>The options are being assessed on the basis on which they affect congestion compared to implementing nothing (i.e. not having a scheme) and this will be critical to finalising a business case for the scheme and developing a preferred option.</p>

Objective 3: To enable the local area to develop in accordance with population and housing growth predicated under Local Plans

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree: 84 (24%) Tend to agree: 89 (25%) Neither agree nor disagree: 78 (22%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective should allow for population, housing, employment, retail, leisure and other commercial growth Concerns around 'feeding traffic' into Bridgewood Roundabout 	<p>While this objective does not have as much strong support as the others, it is important in ensuring the route is sustainable for the future. When developing the objectives, the forecast of population changes, housing growth, employment and other factors were all taken into consideration.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to disagree: 33(9%) • Strongly disagree: 61 (18%) • Don't know: 5 (2%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be consideration given to cyclists and pedestrians • Too many points at which traffic has to stop, thus creating more congestion and air pollution • Motorway traffic should be diverted away from Lord Lees / Taddington Roundabouts 	
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Objective 4: To reduce the impact of additional traffic from the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) and allow LTC to maximise its potential

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 163 (46%) • Tend to agree: 75 (21%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 62 (18%) • Tend to disagree: 12 (3%) • Strongly disagree: 33 (9%) • Don't know: 6 (2%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion is bad enough now I fear for chaos when the Lower Thames Crossing is completed. The consideration of the LTC cannot really be made at this time but it is a major concern that the traffic could be worsened by this when the proposals are desperately needed so as to improve the current problems (notwithstanding the added impact of the LTC) • Air quality and pollution from traffic can only be reduced if you keep the traffic moving • Improve public transport and the routes they need to take 	<p>The scheme options are being assessed on the basis that the LTC will be delivered and KCC are working closely with LTC to ensure that their scheme is taken into account.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get rid of traffic lights now and it would operate better and better road markings for short term gain • There needs to some consideration for all the traffic that is coming along the Walderslade woods road, there is such a bottle neck for those drivers that want to get up on to Lord of the less roundabout heading towards the M2 or the A229. There should be a slip road that takes you straight on to the M2 coast bound. In my view all of this can work better when the lights are not working. 	
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Objective 5: To improve road safety and address known accident hotspots

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 201 (57%) • Tend to agree: 79 (23%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 43 (12%) • Tend to disagree: 6 (2%) • Strongly disagree: 22 (6%) • Don't know: 0 (0%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective should not mean lower speed limits, the speed limit on the A229 is currently 70mph for the majority of the road, and the speed limits near junctions are already too low • Compliance with the limits is low, as people see the speed limits as unnecessary 	<p>Safety will be taken into account in both the design and in the further assessment.</p> <p>Enforcement of speed limits will rest with the appropriate authorities. However, the scheme will be designed to support appropriate speeds.</p>

Objective 6: To make best use of existing infrastructure assets including land and highways

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 121 (35%) • Tend to agree: 124 (36%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 56 (16%) • Tend to disagree: 16 (5%) • Strongly disagree: 25 (7%) • Don't know: 6 (1%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective has the best use of existing infrastructure assets, including land and highways • Will support the economy and aid in construction • Planners should not hesitate to retain assets in order to achieve optimum fulfilment of the objectives 	<p>This objective is intended to ensure existing infrastructure assets including land and highways are used as effectively as possible. When designing the improvements, KCC will, where possible, avoid the need for extensive acquisition of land in sensitive areas and prolonged construction impacts.</p>

Objective 7: To provide suitable routes and facilities for public transport

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 126 (36%) • Tend to agree: 100 (29%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 74 (21%) • Tend to disagree: 15 (4%) • Strongly disagree: 25 (7%) • Don't know: 7 (3%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, I would like to see environmental and safety improvements and better, affordable public transport, footpaths and cycle routes • A bus stop should be provided adjacent to the village, or in the village, for the buses on the main route between the Medway Towns and Maidstone. The existing bus service is grossly inadequate which means that most people are forced into using their cars, where they would otherwise prefer to use public transport 	<p>The proposed improvements aim to reduce congestion which will benefit journey time reliability for the bus and coach services. All existing public transport routes and facilities will be maintained.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transport will benefit only once bluebell hill is widened at the top, buses don't go from Maidstone to junction 3 m2, only direct into Chatham 	
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Objective 8: To provide a safe and attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree: 125 (36%) Tend to agree: 85 (24%) Neither agree nor disagree: 88 (25%) Tend to disagree: 13 (4%) Strongly disagree: 33 (9%) Don't know: 7 (2%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See a need for the promotion and / or clarification of the presence of cycling facilities adjacent to the main A229 carriageway up Bluebell Hill Cyclists can be seen climbing the hill on the dual carriageway itself Importance of maintaining or improving links for pedestrians and non-motorised traffic, and to take all necessary actions to minimise the impact on the environment 	<p>A number of opportunities for improving facilities for cyclists have been identified as part of the scheme. These include, but are not limited to, enhancements to National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 17, potential conversion of existing shared use routes to include segregated cycle tracks and better signing of routes for cyclists. These opportunities will be considered further at the next design stage.</p>

Objective 9: To improve air quality in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly agree: 172 (50%) Tend to agree: 89 (25%) Neither agree nor disagree: 47 (13%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air quality and pollution from traffic can only be reduced if you keep the traffic moving, improve public transport and the routes they need to take Air quality is due to standing traffic, this will 	<p>As part of the environmental assessment, a detailed air quality assessment will be conducted. This will provide information on what the likely effects of changes in traffic flows for each of the scheme options will be and where the effects will be felt. The outcomes of this assessment will inform the feasibility of the options and what</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to disagree: 10 (3%) • Strongly disagree: 23 (7%) • Don't know: 6 (2%) 	<p>reduce massively with free flow slip roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would always support improving air quality and enhancing the environment but cannot see how the proposals for Bluebell Hill would achieve this. It seems that new roads and the expansion of existing roads almost always achieves the exact opposite • It is vitally important to improve air quality in the AQMA. Whatever option is chosen, it is important to maintain or improve links for pedestrians and non-motorised traffic, and to take all necessary actions to minimise the impact on the environment 	<p>mitigation measures will be required to ensure the scheme does not adversely affect the air quality within the AQMA.</p>
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Objective 10: To protect and enhance the local environment

Breakdown of response	Example comments	Project team response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree: 176 (51%) • Tend to agree: 82 (24%) • Neither agree nor disagree: 47 (14%) • Tend to disagree: 9 (3%) • Strongly disagree: 28 (7%) • Don't know: 4 (1%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the environmental sensitivity of this environment must be considered when designing the scheme • Land will have to be taken so that cannot protect and enhance to local environment • Improvements and simplification of the 	<p>Environmental specialists form part of the project team to develop an environmental assessment which will continue throughout the development of the scheme. These specialists will help to identify environmental effects and advise on the required mitigation strategies and potential enhancement opportunities.</p> <p>We have also consulted with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit to ensure they have an input throughout the development of the designs.</p>

	<p>routing of traffic at each junction is essential to overcome current problems. Improvement of the local environment is essential</p>	
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Table 8: Example comments from question 5a in the feedback questionnaire

Overall, it is clear from the responses to these questions that the majority of respondents agreed with the objectives with a majority of responses to each being ‘strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree’. This is particularly evident for options 1, 2, 5, 9 and 10 where over 50% of respondents have selected these options.

There was only a small number of respondents overall that selected the ‘Don’t know’ option suggesting that the majority of participants recognised that the objectives are relevant to the scheme.

Question 6, 7 and 8: Do you think that each option would achieve the scheme objectives listed in Q5?

These questions asked the respondent how well they thought the option would achieve the objectives. Figure 14 shows the response for each option.

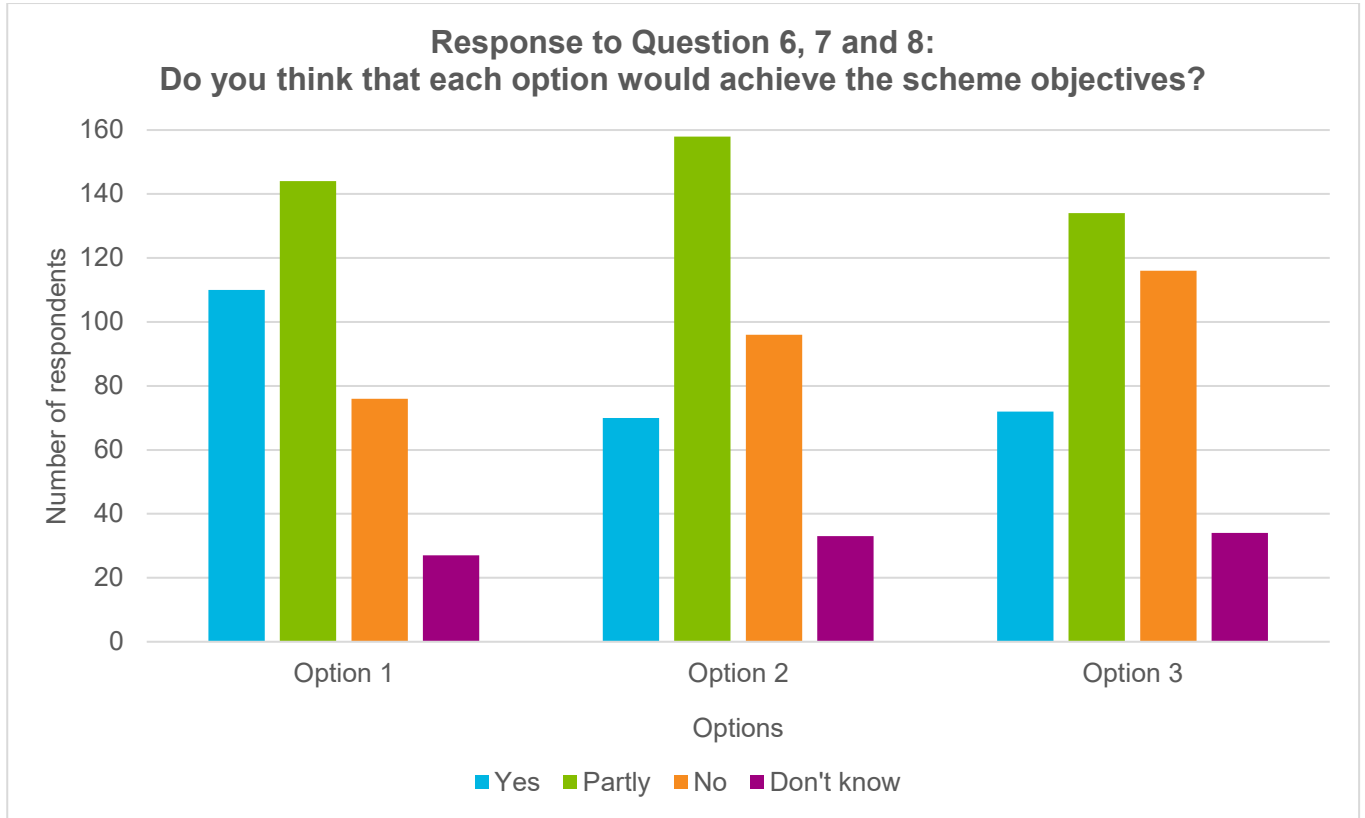


Figure 14: Responses to the question ‘Do you think that each option would achieve the scheme objectives’ for each option.

It is evident that most respondents believed the options would in some ways achieve the objectives. This was demonstrated by the answer ‘partly’ being the most common answer for each option. The feedback shows that option 1 is the most supported option and respondents felt that it was more likely to achieve the objectives. Option 3 shows that ‘no’ is the second most common option with 116 respondents selecting this answer, suggesting that this is the option that the respondents feel is less likely to achieve the objectives. Option 2 has the biggest divide in answers, with less respondents being sure if it would achieve the objectives.

Option 1 feedback

Option one had the most support from respondents choosing 'yes'. Some of the example comments received from the questionnaire are provided below.

Response	Common themes	Project team response
Yes - 110 (31%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has considered all of the requirements • Meets most of the objectives • Has the most comprehensive set of improvements 	The project team will take on board comments from the consultation during a review of the option to determine if anything further can be done to help the option meet the objectives.
Partly - 144 (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in capacity will increase traffic • Like the idea of a new slip road, but not if it reduces access for local traffic • Does not give consideration to local residents, noise and air pollution 	<p>Further demand modelling will be undertaken on the preferred option(s) to make sure that they do not lead to further congestion. Additionally, modelling will need to be undertaken of the preferred option(s) to assess impacts on strategic and local traffic and routing options.</p> <p>More detailed assessment of impacts on local residents, noise and air quality will be undertaken in future work and taken into account in the review and selection of the preferred option.</p>
No - 75 (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will likely be more accidents due to more traffic • Journey times will be longer • The improvements will cause more congestion 	As above, further demand modelling will be needed on the preferred option(s) to determine the potential for increased traffic and accidents as a result.
Don't know - 27 (8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't account for pedestrian safety • There are no benefits for people living in the local area 	Safety for all users, including pedestrians, has been, and will continue to be, taken into account as part of the design process. Existing pedestrian routes and desire lines have been considered and surveys have been undertaken to understand pedestrian usage of the area.

Table 9: Examples of themes from question 6a in the feedback questionnaire

Option 2 feedback

Response	Common themes	Project team response
Yes – 70 (19%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will reduce congestion at A229 • This option will provide a significant improvement to congestion at the junction • Traffic flow would be improved 	<p>Further demand modelling will be needed on the preferred option(s) to determine the potential for increased traffic.</p> <p>The project team will take on board comments from the consultation during a review of the option to determine if anything further can be done to help the option meet the objectives.</p>
Partly - 158 (44%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns that this option is able to carry the levels of traffic without introducing congestion • It is the only option to address the issues with the existing Running Horse Roundabout • Considers most of the objectives 	<p>Further demand modelling will be undertaken on the preferred option(s) to make sure that they do not lead to further congestion. Additionally, modelling will need to be undertaken of the preferred option(s) to assess impacts on strategic and local traffic and routing options.</p>
No – 96 (28%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the capacity of major roads is not the way to achieve objectives 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 • Taddington Roundabout needs to be considered • The main concern is congestion, which traffic lights will only add to 	<p>The options will be compared to a scenario without the scheme to help determine how they compare and contribute to the different objectives.</p> <p>Further demand modelling will be undertaken on the preferred option(s) to make sure that they do not lead to further congestion. Additionally, modelling will need to be undertaken of the preferred option(s) to assess impacts on strategic and local traffic and routing options.</p>
Don't know - 33 (9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to differentiate between options • Needs more consideration of the impact on local residents 	<p>More detailed assessment of impacts on local residents, noise and air quality will be undertaken in future work and taken into account in the review and selection of the preferred option.</p>

Table 10: Example of themes from question 7a in the feedback questionnaire

Option 3 feedback

Response	Common themes	Project team response
Yes - 72 (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This option addresses the problems most thoroughly and achieves most objectives Addressing issues at both roundabouts will cause less congestion 	The project team will take on board comments from the consultation during a review of the option to determine if anything further can be done to help the option meet the objectives.
Partly – 134 (38%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns around the closure of the slip roads to and from the Lord Lees Roundabout causing additional congestion This option will alleviate the traffic problems Improvement to the Taddington Roundabout is needed to fully achieve the objectives 	Although the northbound slip road at Lord Lees would be closed, the existing Taddington Roundabout would be able to cope with the traffic, as the trips between the M2 and A229 would use Bridgewood Roundabout and a new slip road in the westbound direction. Further detailed modelling will be carried out to refine the design to ensure that there will not be additional congestion.
No - 16 (32%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern that no consideration is given to the impact of residents at Blue Bell Hill Hard to visualise changes Safety impact at the Bridgewood and Running Horse Roundabouts No improvement to public transport 	More detailed assessment of impacts on local residents (e.g. including noise and air quality) will be undertaken in future work and taken into account in the appraisal and selection of an option. The Equality Impact Assessment will be developed throughout the project and will take into account how the scheme may impact on people due to their protected characteristics.
Don't know - 34 (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian and cyclist safety needs to be considered further The information given made it hard to 	<p>Responses to the consultation have helped identify further opportunities for improving pedestrian and cycling facilities for consideration at the next design stage.</p> <p>The project team acknowledges the comment regarding it being hard to determine if objectives will be met and this</p>

	determine if all objectives would be met	be taken into account in the planning and delivery of the next consultation.
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Table 11: Example of themes from question 8a in the feedback questionnaire

It is clear from the number of respondents selecting the ‘Don’t know’ option to these questions that some people had difficulty determining how the options will meet the objectives at this stage of the project. Further information will be provided as the design work is developed to help ensure this is clear and will be included in the next consultation to demonstrate how the objectives are being met.

Q9: Do you have a preferred option for the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme?

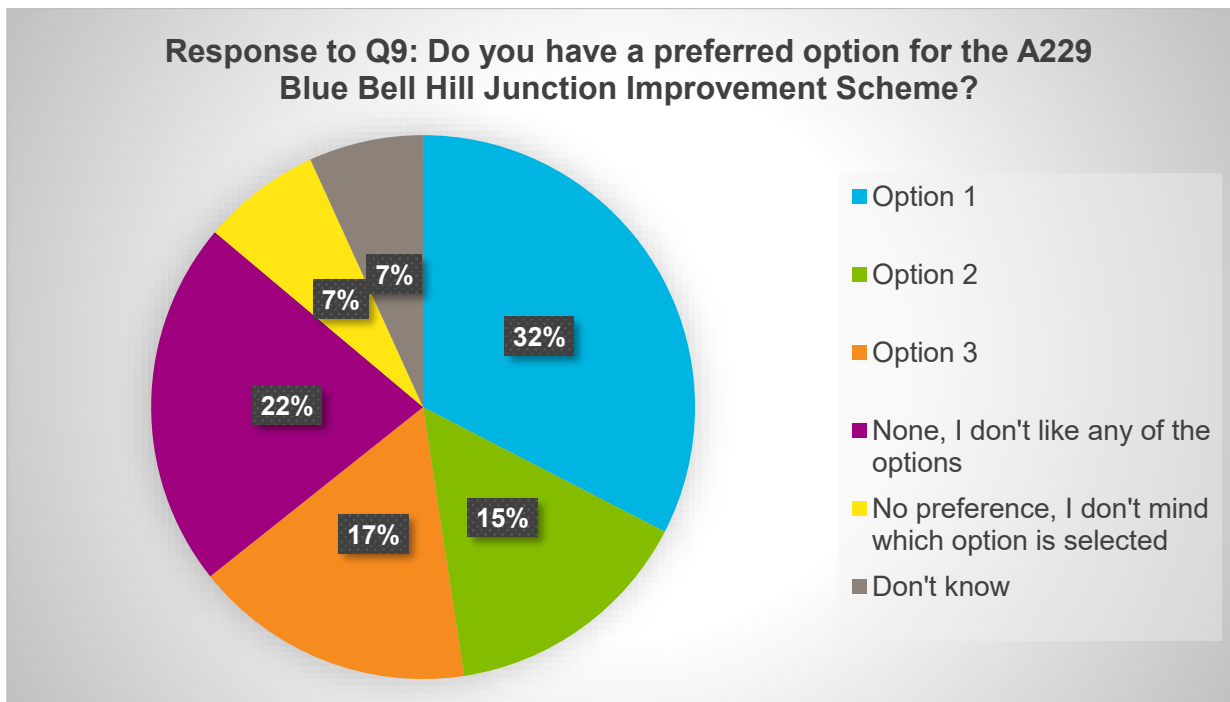


Figure 15: Response to the question ‘Do you have a preferred option for the A229 Blue Bell Hill Junction Improvement Scheme?’

When asked to expand on if they had a preferred option for the scheme, 353 respondents answered the question. It is clear from the results that option 1 was the favourite amongst the respondents with 115 (32%). Respondents felt that it has considered all options and is a balanced solution that will have most impact. They also felt that it of all options, it will have the least amount of disruption and allow traffic to flow more freely. Example comments include “long term this looks like the best option to meet the needs of all junctions, although more work, it will ultimately serve most traffic”, “Option 1 would release

the stress from the traffic congestion”, “Seems the best option for M2 coastbound traffic” and “it offers smoothest transition between the two major roads”.

For those who selected ‘Don’t know’ (24 or 7%), or ‘No preference, I don’t mind which option is selected’ (25 or 8%), many suggest that there is not enough clarity in the plans provided and technical assessments have not been carried out, and therefore it is difficult to provide a view. Additionally, some of the respondents stated that there are positives and negatives of each option and they do not know which is the most appropriate.

77 (22%) of the respondents selected ‘None, I don’t like any of the options.’ The responses show that the main concerns are around the impact on local residents, and fear that the options won’t meet the objectives and reduce traffic in the area. Example comments include “Increasing the capacity of major roads is not the way to achieve objectives 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10”, “They all impair routes for non-motorway traffic”, “residents who live in Chatham Road and who back onto the Southbound carriage have not been thought of”, “It has been repeatedly proven that works such as this will have a detrimental effect on the objectives 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10.”

Alternative Options

Some residents submitted their feedback as a written document rather than through the feedback questionnaire. Within these documents, the residents outlined their suggestions for alternative design options.

One alternative design considers traffic from the LTC and suggests adding a new level 2 lane slip road, where the coastbound M2 crosses the river Medway and joins Blue Bell Hill, to cut into the embankment to the left. Due to the steepness of the M2, the respondent suggests it will not take long until the slip road is low enough to then tunnel under the M2 and then under Blue Bell Hill to the left of the southbound carriageway of the A229, where it can free flow merge with the A229 before joining the M20.

The respondent suggests that this option will result in Blue Bell Hill and Walderslade being bypassed and traffic flow will have been improved. They further state that vehicles making the journey will have emitted considerably less CO² by avoiding the unnecessary climb and congestion.

Another respondent has taken aspects of all three existing options to create another and provided images to accompany the changes. These include changes to the design along

the LTC to M20 path and from the M20 to LTC. The first includes using option 2/3's new M2 Eastbound slip road up to the Bridgewood Roundabout with the roundabout expansion to create a new junction. This junction would create a "peel off system" for traffic and would be mainly for alternate route use such as for local Walderslade traffic or Blue Bell Hill residence traffic. It also includes removing Blue Bell Hill to common road slip as part of the Blue Bell resident access works which will accommodate space for the Blue Bell Hill to M2. The respondent suggests that this solution will result in the Bridgewood overhead dual carriageway requiring no alterations.

The second option suggested from M20 to LTC includes a new roundabout which will have a slip going to the Cobtree Roundabout, that would be mainly used for traffic going uphill. Where the elevated ramp/bridge or retaining walls are being built for the free flow filter lane, another should be added from A229 Blue Bell Hill southbound in an overhead bridge section to allow M20 London bound traffic easier access to the new 6a roundabout. The respondent provided a full breakdown of these changes, including fly through images to help visualise the changes.

These alternative designs will be reviewed by the project team and taken into consideration at the next design stage.

3.1 Environmental considerations

As the project is still in the early design phase, the environmental impact of the three options are still being identified and considered and environmental assessments continue to be carried out.

Question 10 of the questionnaire asked for feedback on any potential environmental impacts. 192 respondents provided an answer, with some referring to earlier responses they gave in the questionnaire. The key themes identified in the responses were:

- ensuring that effort is made during construction to be environmentally conscious – 69 (36%)
- reducing air and noise pollution – 44 (23%)
- impact on local residents – 23 (12%)
- ensuring that biodiversity, noise and carbon dioxide / monoxide levels are prioritised -13 (7%)

- encouraging more sustainable methods of transport – 10 (5%)
- protecting local habitats – 9 (5%)

The environment team have undertaken a Phase 1 habitat survey, an initial biodiversity assessment and a habitat assessment to ensure that protection of local biodiversity is an integral part of the project from an early stage and to recommend potential enhancement opportunities.

The team have also conducted early consultations with a number of statutory environmental organisations to gather information and to feed into the design to minimise any potential adverse effects. All measures possible will be taken to ensure that construction works are undertaken in an environmentally sensitive way.

Work on the environmental impact of the scheme will be ongoing through the development of the project and more information provided in the next consultation.

Section 3 analysis

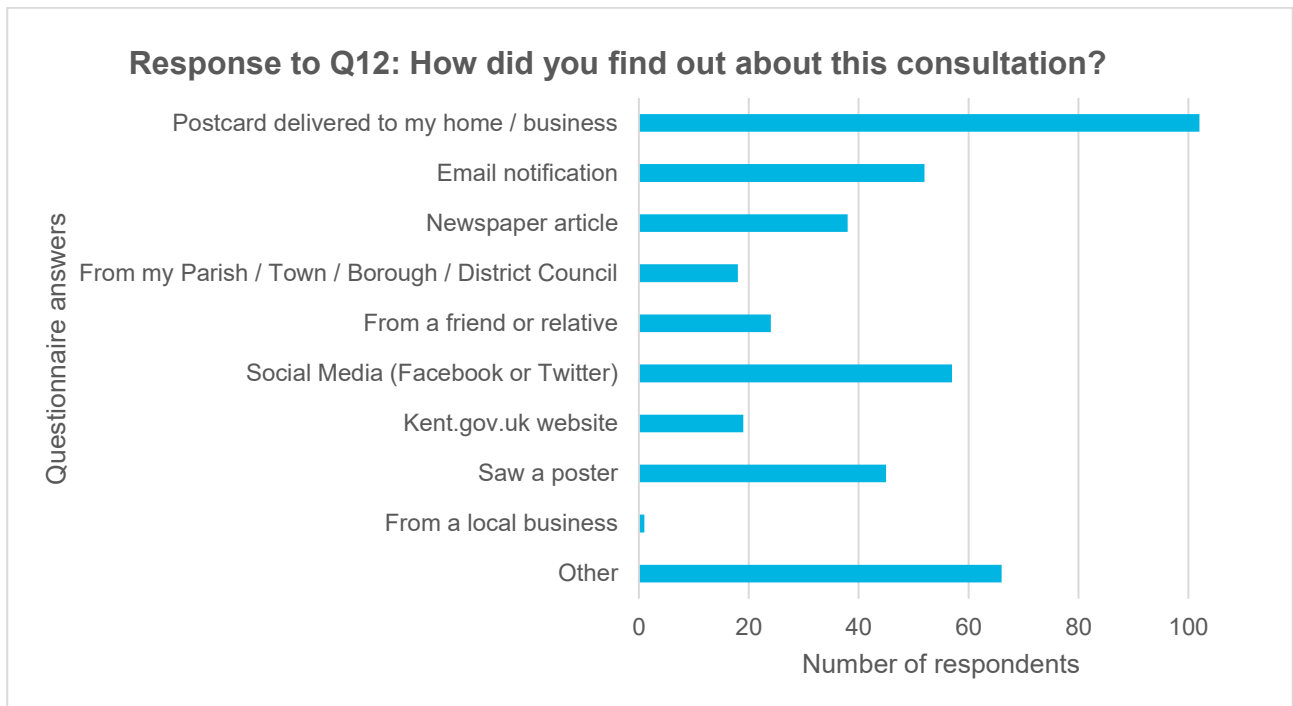


Figure 16: Response to the question ‘How did you find out about this consultation?’

Section 3 of the questionnaire reviewed how the consultee found out about the consultation and how user friendly they found the virtual consultation hub. It was clear from the results (figure 16) that the postcards sent to homes and businesses was beneficial as this was the most popular way that people found out about the consultation. This represented 102 (24%) respondents. Additionally, of the 66 people (15%) that selected the ‘Other’ option, 29 people found out via the road signs used for advertising. The remaining 37 confirmed this was via the Kent County Council website, online via social media, via email from local interest groups, via local councillors and news, and word of mouth.

Due to the consultation events being completely virtual, it was important to determine how easy the consultees found using the virtual consultation hub. This information is also helpful to KCC so that it can be understood if virtual consultation exhibitions would be a beneficial resource for future consultations.

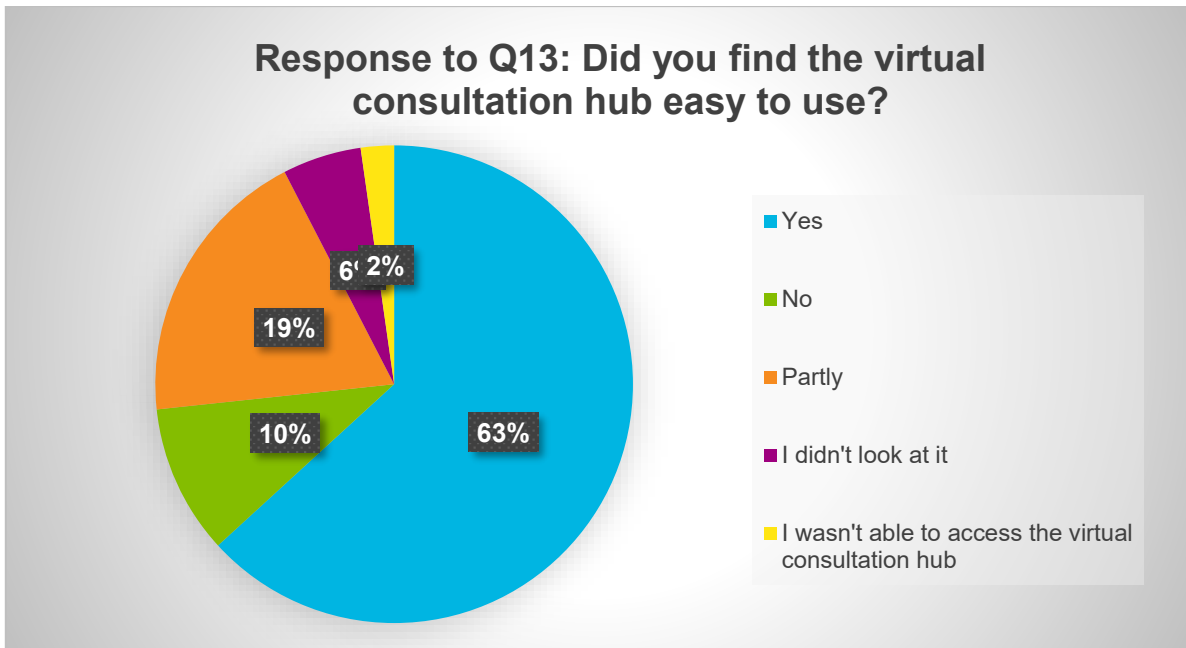


Figure 17: Response to the question: ‘Did you find the virtual consultation hub easy to use?’

In total, 225 (63%) of participants found that it was easy to use. Of those who provided further detail, 24 respondents confirmed the platform was easy to use and was very informative and liked the use of audio for each board. Additionally, nine respondents said that although it was easy to follow, it was difficult to view the plans and diagrams depending on the device used to view the Virtual Consultation Hub. Seven respondents offered suggested improvements. These included opening the consultation when the postcards were delivered, incorporating virtual journeys as well as 3D views of the plan and adding a plan showing current and future movement overlaid to make proposals more visual for the audience.

36 (10%) of the participants found that the virtual consultation hub was not easy to use. 26 respondents left a comment explaining their reasoning with the main concern being that it was not compatible with all devices, meaning that 16 respondents could not follow the exhibition easily and were unable to read the plans. Similarly, two respondents suggested that the plans were very technical and without an engineering background, they are very difficult to understand. Four respondents stated they found it difficult to compare the options and suggested making the exhibition more visual than ‘wordy’. Other suggestions included adding flyovers and 3D plans of the options. Three respondents also asked that video conferences or socially distanced stakeholder meetings were considered to discuss directly with the project team.

Section 4 analysis

Section 4 of the questionnaire focussed on understanding more about the consultees. Those participating on behalf of an organisation were not asked to complete this section.

Of the 271 people who answered yes to the question are you willing to provide more information about yourself?, 181 (66%) were male, 81 (30%) were female and 6 (4%) preferred not to specify. There was a varied age range of respondents, which are outlined in Figure 18.

Of the male participants, 168 (92%) of these agreed that the improvements to the A229 are required. There were respondents from all age brackets included in this number. For those who selected that they in some way disagree, all were within the 50-74 age brackets.

Of the female participants, 64 (79%) agreed in some way that the improvements to the A229 are required. Similar to the male responses, these were varied across all age brackets. 15 (19%) females selected they disagree in some way, who again are varied though all age brackets, the most common being 35-49.

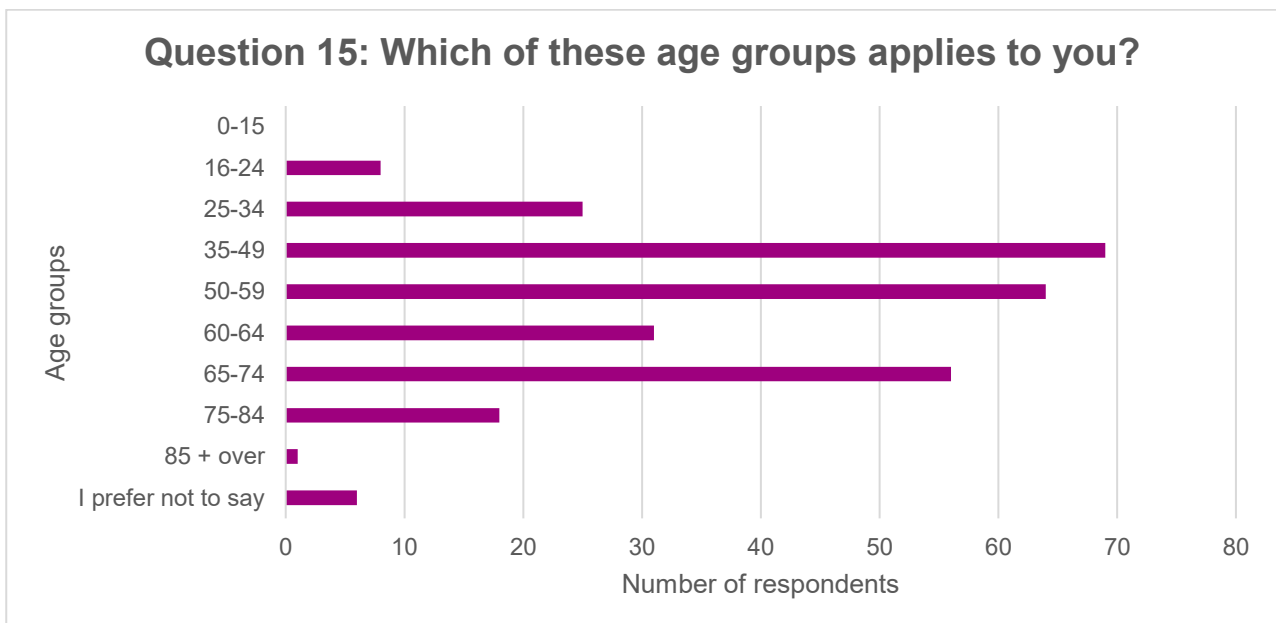


Figure 38: Response to question 15 ‘Which of these age groups applies to you?’

The most common age range responding to the consultation was 35-49 followed closely by 50-59 and 65-84.

Notably, 25 (9%) of the respondents were ages 25-34 and 8 (3%) were aged 16-24 meaning that the consultation attracted a younger audience which could be attributed to the targeted social media content as well as hosting the event online. Eight of the 32 people in these two age brackets stated that they found out about the event from the road signs. 30 of the 33 respondents in this age bracket specified that they strongly agree to the scheme and strongly agree that the improvements are required.

Each individual age group selected Option 1 as their preferable option. Those in the age bracket of 50 and above chose Option 3 as more preferable than Option 2, while those in the age bracket of 49 and below placed Option 2 as more preferable than Option 3. Option 1 was also the most preferable of those who selected 'yes' to the question 'do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality act 2010?'. The primary reasons given for this was that "Option 1 appears to have considered all options and is a balanced solution to the problem" and "it achieves the goal of improving traffic flow and looks as though it would be effective well into the future". Those who selected that they 'don't know' or 'none, I don't like any of these options' raised concerns that the proposals 'do not adequately separate local and motorway traffic' and the impact on air quality.

Another question asked in the 'About You' section of the questionnaire asked if the respondent was considered a Carer. 22 people responded 'Yes' to this question of which 16 (73%) either strongly agreed or tended to agree when asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that improvements are required to Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges.

3.2 Equality analysis

To help ensure that KCC are meeting obligations under the Equality Act 2010, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIAs) was undertaken and is available online at:

<https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/A229BluebellHill>

Question 11 of the questionnaire asked the respondents for their views on KCC's equality analysis and if there was anything else that should be considered relating to equality and diversity. In total, there were 99 responses to this question. Of these, 65 (66%) were comments from respondents stating either 'no comment' or unsure how an equalities analysis relates to the project.

Of the remaining 24 answers, the areas suggested include:

- need to consider better rural bus services
- the safety of pedestrians and cyclists when in proximity to construction traffic, HGVs, diverted traffic must be considered
- pedestrian movement through this area is currently problematic and impacts all groups
- the impact on physical and mental health due to air, light, noise and water pollution must be considered
- in the new scheme, cars and other road traffic must not be prioritised over those who are walking and cycling
- local residents and those caring for residents need equal if not priority over drivers looking for a short cut from two motorways
- impact on local communities and wildlife
- impact of pollution on vulnerable people
- maintaining cycle routes and pedestrian footpaths throughout the development
- adequate routes for people on mobility scooters
- ensuring those who rely on public transport are not subject to delays due to roadworks
- making bus stops clearer to all road users, particularly the elderly and less able pedestrians

The information provided in response to this question will be used to update the Equality Impact Assessment for the next stage of the project.

3.0 Conclusion and next steps

Overall, the proposed improvement scheme for the A229 Blue Bell Hill was well received based on the consultation responses, but there was also feedback which has highlighted that further detail and modelling in the next round of public consultation will be helpful and important going forward. This first consultation took place in the early stages of the project. KCC felt this was important to provide residents and other stakeholders with information on the scheme and the options being looked at as soon as possible. A second consultation will take place on more detailed designs in Summer 2022. Feedback from this consultation will be used to help design the future consultation process and material.

The responses to the consultation showed that from the 359 who responded, 85% of those said that improvements are required to the A229 Blue Bell Hill, including the M2 Junction 3 and M20 Junction 6 interchanges, by responding with 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree'.

In terms of the options presented, the feedback showed that Option 1 was the most favoured, with 32% of those who responded saying that they preferred it. However, this is followed by the response 'None, I don't like any of the responses', which 22% of those who responded selected. Along with other feedback, this indicates that the consultees would like further options explored and more detail presented (i.e. following further modelling) so that they can review and provide feedback on this.

All consultation responses have been and will continue to be carefully considered by KCC and the project team. This feedback will help inform which design is progressed as well as assist in the development of the next stage of public consultation for the scheme.