

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**Monday, 25 January 2021**

**PRESENT:**        **Borough Councillors Stanyer (Chairman), Bruneau, Lidstone, Scott, Woodward and Lewis**  
**County Councillors Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), Barrington-King, Holden, McInroy, Oakford and Rankin**  
**Parish Councillor Mackonochie**

**Officers in Attendance:** David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Terry Hughes (Community Safety Manager), Nick Baldwin (Senior Engineer, Parking), Ethan Field, John Strachan, Paul Leary and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors McDermott, Morton and Rutland

**APOLOGIES**

TB13/20        There were no apologies.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

TB14/20        There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

**NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK**

TB15/20        Councillors Hayward, Atwood and Pope had registered to speak on Agenda Item 6. In addition 3 members of the public had registered to speak.

Councillor Rands had registered to speak on Agenda Item 7.

One member of the public had registered to speak on Agenda Item 9.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 19 OCTOBER 2020**

TB16/20        Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

**RESOLVED** - The minutes of the meeting dated 19 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**KENT COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP**

TB17/20        Helen Kellar, Therese Hammond and Chris Fribbins from the Kent Community Rail Partnership (Sustrans) gave a presentation that included a brief overview of the Kent Community Rail Partnership, its projects and activities which included the following:

- It was noted that the only station within the current remit for the Tunbridge Wells area was Paddock Wood.
- Established in 2003, it had 3 rail lines across Kent.
  - o Swale Rail Line
  - o Medway Valley Line
  - o Kent Downs Line
- The organisation was funded through the Department for Transport,

South Eastern, Kent CC, Medway Council, Parish Grants and the Community Rail Network.

- Community Rail was a Government strategy, supported by the rail industry that engaged local people in the development and promotion of local and rural routes, services and stations.
- Dissemination of information was undertaken in a number of ways, e.g. pop ups at railway stations that provided information on a variety of topics e.g. tourism and rail safety.
- It also undertook work towards independent rail travel for those with accessibility issues.
- Measures towards better Active Travel were also promoted.
- Due to the pandemic a number of on line measures had been introduced to help combat loneliness and isolation.
- There was always the opportunity to welcome partners to the Partnership. In addition, joint working opportunities for Active Travel and when able to, pop-ups to help promote local areas.

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- A number of activities had taken place during Covid-19 including work with community groups and schools. Work was also underway with South Eastern to discuss messaging for when the Country came out of the current situation, to help build confidence and provide assurance for the public to return to using public transport.
- Membership included a Town Councillor from Paddock Wood (David Sargison), but as no stations in Tunbridge Wells were included there were currently no Members from Tunbridge Wells.
- South East Community Rail Partnership had just taken on the Tonbridge to Hastings line, which might be of interest to Members in Tunbridge Wells.
- The Kent Rail Partnership currently did not have any of the spurs going towards Ashford. However it did provide input into the Kent Strategy and would provide advice to those who were looking to adopt a station.

## **CORNFORD LANE/HALLS HOLE ROAD**

TB18/20 A presentation was given by Howard Mackenzie and Gary Palmer from the Cornford Lane, Halls Hole Road Residents Association which included the following:

Gary Palmer:

- A working Group to address the traffic issues in Cornford Land and Halls Hole Road should be supported.
- The current problems included gridlock, illegal use by HGV's, verbal abuse and threats to residents, damage to cars, prevention of access by emergency vehicles, the collapsing road structure in Cornford Lane and the high earth bank in Halls Hole Road.
- Safety was of primary concern as Cornford Lane had many blind bends and entrances. However, this did not deter cars and vans from speeding which resulted in numerous accidents, many of which required attendance by the emergency services.
- The junction of Cornford Land and Halls Hole Road was almost totally blind when exiting Cornford Lane and required drivers to listen for approaching traffic due to the lack of visibility.

- Pedestrians were also required to use the junction.
- The junction with Bayhall Road and Halls Hole Road had seen two pedestrian injuries caused by a speeding car and although Kent CC had undertaken some safety improvement works, the previously injured people believed that the work had done nothing to prevent a similar accident re-occurring.
- In Cornford Lane at least three cyclists had been knocked off their bikes, two rendered unconscious which required hospital treatment.
- Pedestrians in both roads, including Cornford Lane, both residents and staff at Aspens had had many near misses, including being hit by wing mirrors or having to literally jump into the hedgerow to avoid being hit.
- The Ramblers Association, though keen to reinstate its use, had long ago removed Cornford Lane from its recommended walking routes, citing it as being too dangerous for walkers.
- Two testimonies from two traumatised residents in Cornford Lane:

*"I parked our car, leaving the driver's door open so that my son could get out. My daughter got out of the rear passenger door and waited by the open driver's door. My son had just got out of the car when a large four-wheel-drive vehicle approached at high speed. My daughter, realising that the approaching vehicle could neither pass without hitting the door nor stop in time, slammed the door shut and ran to safety. Fortunately, my son didn't try to follow his sister – he would not have made it - and instead flattened himself against the side of the car as the vehicle went flying past. I have no doubt at all that if my children hadn't made the decisions that they did in those bare seconds then one or both of them would have been killed."*

*"A large four-wheel-drive came around the corner (at the junction of Cornford Lane & Halls Hole Road) so fast I had no time to take avoiding action. I don't think that the driver had even noticed me at first but then she appeared to see me and jammed on her brakes. She was so close and going so fast I had no time get out of the way, I just shut my eyes, expecting an impact. But when the tyre screeching finished, and I opened my eyes I found that the car had just managed to stop. But it was so close that, without having to reach out, I was able to put my hand on the bonnet. I have no doubt at all that if the driver had left her braking just a fraction of a second later then I would have been seriously injured or killed."*

- There were a number of interested parties who should be considered for inclusion in the working group. If agreement was reached, that a proposal for Membership of the group be determined within a week of this meeting and forwarded to the JTB Chairman for approval.
- This issue should be a JTB priority.

Howard Mackenzie:

- It was said at an earlier JTB, that much time had been wasted on this issue already, the residents fully agreed with this statement.
- In the 30 years that the residents had asked Kent and Tunbridge Wells to help with the problems on these roads, no action, not even a decision had been made that had resolved the dangers currently faced by residents.
- Almost everything that had been forewarned had taken place:
  - o Frequent accidents, some resulting in injuries and

- hospitalisation, inflicted by vehicles striking walkers, riders and other drivers.
- Families leaving Dunorlan Park endangered immediately by fast vehicles on Halls Hole Road where there was no speed restriction.
  - Residents and visitors unable to exercise their right to walk or ride safely through outstandingly beautiful areas.
  - Road subsidence and bank slippage escalating under the weight of traffic pushing Councils towards costly remedial work.
  - Gridlocks occurring most days, some up to 40 or 60 minutes, denying emergency service access to both residents and the care homes, while serious economic loss accrued to those unable to get to work.
  - Air pollution, noise from engines, horns and verbal abuse spoil the AONB with animal and plant life threatened by the escalating environmental harm to verges, hedges, trees and habitats.
- A long history recorded significant numbers including many Councillors who agreed there was a problem but there had only been 2 occasions where there was any progress towards a solution:
    - In 1996 Kent CC dropped a proposed Access Only Order when police deemed it unenforceable.
    - In 2014 following a request from the JTB, Kent CC developed 5 schemes for consultation. An overwhelming 79% voted from 223 respondents supported a proposal to implement a trial closure of Cornford Lane. The second most favoured proposal, do nothing, attracted just 7%.
  - Despite this conclusive support, the JTB voted to defer progress until the TW Transport Strategy was released.
  - Published in 2015 this strategy stated “The well documented issue of rat running on Cornford Lane will also be a key consideration of any future proposals as well as the target to reduce the need to use Cornford Lane.”
  - These were empty words as nothing had happened, time and money wasted.
  - In May 2020 residents wrote to 25 Councillors to ask for their support to include both roads as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund Scheme. Acknowledgements were received from only 2 Councillors and the proposal was ignored. However, Reynolds Lane, whose circumstances sounded very similar was successful.
  - The residents were frustrated that after 30 years and thousands of hours and considerable contributions from residents of both time and money, no action had been taken. To quote one Councillor it was ‘kicked into the long grass’.
  - It was too easy to trot out the same reasons, lack of money, or to wait until the effect of the roundabout that may or may not happen.
  - Those that would like to see these lanes remain in their current state as relief roads for the problems on the trunk roads must be challenged.
  - Pembury Parish Council agreed that the ‘congestion and rat running in Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road are terrible’ and hoped to work with the residents and appropriate authorities to find a solution. As one of their Councillors stated ‘Absolutely total bloody madness and it’s not going to change unless something fundamental is done’.
  - The world had changed since 2014 and the residents ask that the

- issue should not be ignored.
- The residents ask that agreement be given tonight for a Working Group with stakeholders to include representatives from both roads to discuss these problems and develop solutions.
  - The residents had an inexpensive scheme that they would like to propose. It was based on a suggestion from Kent CC Highways in 2015 and would not require the closure of Cornford Lane. It would address the problems and would greatly ease the flow of traffic on the Pembury Road.
  - If the JTB decided not to work with the residents on a solution, or decided to defer again, the residents would ask for formal advice as to:
    - o Why do these roads merit no consideration?
    - o Why were safety issues disregarded that so many have experienced and photographic evidence showed?
    - o Why was there no response to the suggestions for the Government financed Active Travel Initiative?
  - In addition why had so many environmental policies been ignored including those that strived to safeguard ancient and valuable rural lanes.
  - A key part of the Draft Local Plan, the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment recorded the high value of the landscape surrounding these roads and noted the need to combat 'traffic pressures leading to a decline in the quality of many vulnerable rural lanes'.
  - Supplementary Planning Guidance on Rural Lanes cited enhancement opportunities for such lanes, and promoted both these roads for their recreational value. It ranked Cornford Lane as 3<sup>rd</sup> highest of all 167 lanes in the Borough assessed on landscape, nature, recreation and history.
  - The JTB had a choice to be remembered either for safeguarding something of immense value to, and accessible by, those who live in your Borough, or for doing nothing.
  - The way forward was abundantly clear, please work with the residents and do not defer action again.

Joanna Riolo, member of the public had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

“ Good Evening

I live on a farm with my family, with access to both HHR and CL. Being the third generation of my family to live here, I have experienced first-hand the transformation of the area over the years.

The growth and popularity of our town has, of course, placed considerable stress on all infrastructures, not just our roads.

I have seen HHR turn from a quiet back route where we could walk and cycle as children, to an important artery for the transportation system.

For much that I would love to go back to those idyllic times, the idea that we can somehow turn back the clock is, in my opinion, unrealistic.

Any solution we find must deal with the reality of a changing world and an increase in the population density in our area.

Over time there have been many ideas discussed, including a one-way system on both HHR and CL, as well as resident-only access. In our opinion, both ideas carry severe side effects. I know for a fact that many other

residents in HHR, Pembury and Hawkenbury are in agreement with us. Vehicles do speed on both roads, and the awareness that no one is coming in the other direction could lead to even higher speeds. This would put riders and walkers in more danger than ever.

Of course, on a purely personal level, limiting access to residents only is tempting, but inevitably it is a way of passing our problems onto someone else. If CL and HHR get "resident only" access, or even just a one-way system, a lot of traffic will then be forced to go onto Bayhall Road and KWR, past the surgery and hospital, rendering it even more congested at peak times. Pembury Road, already very busy, would also see an increase in traffic, just at a time when SKA is planning an expansion. In general, the idea of "residents only" is not a scalable one.

In my view, the worst cases of congestion are caused by heavy goods vehicle trying to use the shortcuts. One relatively low-cost suggestion would be to have increased, clearer signage at all junctions. Only cars and small vans should be allowed on these narrow roads.

We had heard via the grapevine about that a consultation group. We definitely welcome such a development, we'd like to be involved, and we ask that more stakeholders are included. We'd like to see the group include not only CL and HHR residents, but a broader panel of representatives of people who would be affected by any changes. We'd welcome the inclusion of Pembury Parish Council, Hawkenbury Resident groups, as well as representatives from SKA, and from the numerous local businesses in our area. We would welcome inclusivity and transparency on all proposals, easily achieved in this day and age via Facebook communities and other social media channels, and not just small, selective e-mail groups. This way, one can be sure that, before proceeding, any proposals have the support of the wider community.

Finally, a word about the increased need for healthy living and sustainability.

I myself am a keen walker and runner, I enjoy the park and numerous rambling routes and public rights of way in our beautiful countryside. I understand that a cycle path is being considered between TW and Pembury, extending the existing bridleway and footpath on HWL. This would allow TW and Hawkenbury residents to walk, ride or cycle, from town, past the sports pitches, in between the woods and fields, all the way to Pembury.

This route would offer greater safety, as car traffic is hardly present and has no means to increase. It also builds upon existing walking paths which, as lockdown as proved. are already extremely popular and widely known. The presence of two cycle paths, almost parallel and very close to each other, might perhaps not be the best use of funds.

Katy Brooks, member of the public had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

“Good evening,

Thank you for allowing me to speak at this meeting. I have registered to speak as a Resident, not as Chair of Pembury Parish Council because the attempted closure of Cornford Lane in 2014 is the SOLE reason I joined the Parish Council. I was so incensed at the time at their attempt to restrict the road to through traffic and the knock-on effect it would have on the Pembury Road. that it forced me to join the Council, my first intention being to join the Planning Working Group (as it was then) to ensure that I was aware of any future attempts to try this again. Although speaking as a resident, I can confirm that the position of the Parish Council is whilst we support the residents desire to make the road a safer place, we categorically do not support any one-way system or closure to through traffic due to the knock-on effect on congestion on the Pembury Road. I see that the Pembury Society support the notion of creating a working group, morally they cannot possibly support any form of closure or one-way systems, as their main objection to the Hendy application was the congestion on the Pembury Road – visit their website and look on the congestion tab to see their evidence of videos and photographs, so logically any form of closure would only exacerbate this exponentially.

I spoke at the meeting in 2014 against the closure, this was before I started using the lane on a regular basis to take my children to school in Langton Green. So a minimum of 4 trips a day (extra for forgotten kit bags or musical instruments or children finishing at different times) for 6 days a week for two years, then a minimum of 4 trips a day for 5 days a week for two years, in addition to all the times I use the lane to get to Tunbridge Wells or to visit my best friend in Eridge mean that I have been up and down the lane almost 4000 times so I feel that I am more than qualified to speak about the problems affecting the lane in its entirety, not just the little sections outside the particular residents houses.

As Howard Mackenzie will testify, I have got out to direct traffic on many occasions; unlike the congestion on Halls Hole Road which rectifies itself in time, in Cornford Lane someone has to take control of the situation and guide the congested vehicles - generally transit vans, flatbed transits, 7.5T lorries and on one occasion a horsebox - to get the traffic flowing again. The most recent occasion was when there had been an accident or breakdown on the Pembury Road, and I had to direct traffic on 4 separate points in the Lane!

Although a roundabout at the Blackhurst Lane traffic lights will help with the traffic flow along the Pembury Road, this is solely in mitigation for the Kingstanding Development, and not to alleviate the current congestion problems suffered in normal times.

Talking of normal times, we currently have over 98,500 deaths from Covid in the UK, so understandably all Local Authorities are focusing their attention and finances on fighting this pandemic, and for this matter to be raised again from Cornford Lane residents wishing to turn their road into what is in effect a private road, but still funded by the Council, an Enid Blyton idyll if you will, just beggars belief.

Thank you for your time.”

Jane Fenwick, speaking as Chair of the Transport Working Group of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum provided the following statement:

“When members of the Joint Transportation Board discussed the traffic issues in Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road in 2014, they failed to take action.

In the subsequent 6 years, the situation along both roads has got significantly worse as the catalogue of damage, danger and frustrations described in the residents’ submission shows. Halls Hole Road and Cornford Lane are now part of the ‘unofficial Tunbridge Wells bypass’. These lanes are completely inappropriate for this purpose. They are dangerous for drivers and residents alike, and unusable by other road users particularly pedestrians and cyclists.

This can’t go on. This is an opportunity to transform Cornford Lane in particular back into the quiet lane that it once was for the people of Tunbridge Wells and Pembury to use safely, as is their right. It should be pointed out that Cornford Lane is a Rural Lane of some antiquity which scored particularly highly on all counts in TWBC’s evaluation of Rural Lanes. The Borough, and indeed also KCC have a duty to preserve and enhance such Rural Lanes and appear to be in breach of those obligations.

This past year has transformed the thinking around traffic management. Our locked down populations now walk and cycle more than they used to, and they need access to the safe places to do so. Government policy supports these behaviour changes not just while the pandemic lasts but as a necessary development towards achieving national and local carbon neutral targets, and less pollution as well as higher levels of fitness in the population.

The move to home working has transformed the future of work and the necessity of the daily commute. Change is possible now while traffic flows are reduced, and while people reassess their lives and priorities.

Government has encouraged experimentation with alternative traffic management ideas that make more space for people to move around their communities safely.

The measures to curb the Covid 19 pandemic which have kept most people at home have already shown what could be achieved in these two lanes when traffic is significantly reduced and other road users are allowed more space. The residents have reported that this fortuitous ‘traffic experiment’ has been shown to work and a transformation achieved.

The JTB can do nothing again --- or you decide to make a lasting legacy from this pandemic by supporting the proposal from residents to investigate the alternatives to make Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road safe, green, pollution free for all road users. We believe that the proposal will bring great benefits to the people of Pembury and Tunbridge Wells.

We urge the JTB to support it and set up the working party.”



Councillor Hayward had registered to speak which included the following:

- The aim by the residents had always been to turn Cornford Lane into a private road.
- Cornford Lane was a rat run because of the congestion on the Pembury Road at peak times.
- Nobody would choose to use Cornford Lane. Put simply if the Pembury Road flowed smoothly at peak times, only locals would use Cornford Lane.
- The demand was for a working group to consider new proposals. These comprised of a one-way with restrictions which had been looked at before by the relevant authorities, including Kent CC.
- The lobby group would like to seek to control the composition of any proposed working group, leaving those most affected, the residents of Pembury, with very much a minority participation.
- Any working group should consider all options, but with the proposed composition and terms of reference was likely to only focus within Cornford Lane and not outside.
- The true solution to Cornford Lane being a rat run was Pembury Road flowing at peak times.
- Active Travel would feature but the concern was that Active Travel would be confused with leisure activity. Improvement or renewal of the cycle lane on Pembury Road would truly conform with the Active Travel ideals.
- The inclusion of Halls Hole Road on this working group was unclear and should be a totally separate issue.
- There was little mention of the roundabout replacing the traffic lights, with the obvious aim to make Pembury Road flow better. This wouldn't suit the closure of Cornford Lane narrative.
- This demand for a working group would be better suited for the Town Forum or Pembury Parish Council – this is what they were for.

Councillor Atwood had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

“Good Evening members of the JTB

Cornford Lane has been recognised as a travel route from as far back as the early 1400's and whilst the traffic problems don't stretch that far back, they are a very severe nuisance on both Halls Hole road, and Cornford Lane in the present, even with the current pandemic.

The issue of the rat running and congestion of Halls Hole road and Cornford Lane was last visited by the JTB back in 2014. Seven years have now passed and the residents are no closer now than they were back then, talk of petitions both for and against the closure of Cornford Lane have been discussed but nothing was eventually made concrete

The decrease in traffic was noticeable by all during the first lockdown, and the subsequent increase after was evident, more so to these residents who have to regularly contend with HGV's and goods vans using very narrow back country lanes, to try and bypass the traffic issues on the Pembury road.

These residents have a daily battle with congested and often impassable routes to their own homes, let alone anywhere further. I have heard it bandied about that “the residents are just concerned about the cost of their

properties” I think that this is far from the case. One email I received and I believe members of the JTB were copied into stated that the residents had sold their property and moved away, a section of their email reads:

‘After 24 years of living in the unique development known as Dunorlan Farm, my wife and I have decided enough is enough! Your failure to address the road safety issues in Halls Hole Road and Cornford Lane have finally driven us to seek an alternative home.’

Remember that:

- Two people have been knocked down In Halls Hole Road, hospitalised and spent months in recovery. (although this has been clarified by Cllr Rankin to have been at the Junction of Halls Hole road and Bayhall road, and the junction has since been rectified to resolve this).
- Two cyclists have been knocked off their bikes and rendered unconscious in Cornford Lane.
- There have been many near misses involving pedestrians in Cornford Lane including two that, but for a matter of inches, would very likely have been fatal.

This sentiment and feeling have been echoed by many emails that I have received. Residents bought the properties along these routes to be close to amenities, but also within the great areas of woodland and fields that we are lucky enough to have around the environs of our Town and Borough. Many comments I have received have been to proclaim the joy at seeing people walk and cycle along these routes without fear of incident.

The manager of Aspens commented

‘One of the areas that we are blessed with is easy access to the wood and trails owned by Aspens, along with our Bluebell Café, both of which are normally open to the public. The wood has been an essential escape for the people we support and our staff, both being able to exercise in line with government guidance. Normally, crossing Cornford Lane can be at times a challenging experience due to the speed of the vehicles, with many risk assessments being put into place to ensure close supervision of people crossing the road and has further underlined the need to address the traffic congestion and speeding post lockdown.’

Considering the Councils promise towards carbon neutrality by 2030, I feel we have to do everything we can to bring back these country lanes into walking and cycling routes, but we cannot forget that people live down them as well, so we must come up with a strategy that helps everyone as much as possible.

In 2015 the TWBC Transport Strategy gave little consideration to Cornford Lane, save to state that: The well-documented issue of rat running on Cornford Lane will also be a key consideration of any future proposals.

The main aims of any future improvement schemes for the A264 [include]:

To Manage congestion and to reduce the need to use the parallel Cornford Lane route.

However Cornford Lane has not been a key consideration of any proposals since then, over 7 years ago and apart from a brief period of contact with KCC Highways who were looking into a one way system.

Cllr Bruneau and I have been meeting with the residents of Cornford Lane over the last year and a half to try and come up with some sort of solution to the problem. And I believe we both feel that the formation of a working group is the best way forward.

I would envisage that a working group would be set up with people representing all the areas that are affected, so equal weight is given to their concerns and ideas for possible solutions. It is important that all areas are represented and considered to minimise conflicting ideas, and to come to a workable solution, that benefits the area as a whole. This working group is especially crucial now, if the idea of a roundabout on the Pembury road is to be considered as that could lead to an even further increase in traffic down these two areas.

Thankyou for your time.”

Councillor Pope had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

“I would like to thank the residents and businesses on Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Lane for writing to me and for attending this meeting.

I am aware of a number of the issues on these roads having received complaints since becoming a Councillor, and from my personal experience of driving, walking and cycling along the roads.

Everyone, I am sure, would like to find a way to alleviate the issues to make the roads safer and protect the verges and the flora and fauna.

My thoughts are that the Friends of Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road should produce a report that clearly details all the issues they are encountering, with supporting evidence, and provides a number of options, along with an analysis of the pros and cons of each option, on how they envisage the issues can be alleviated whilst keeping the roads open for traffic. Any options need to consider the occupants of around 125 residential properties (more than 300 residents) that use these two roads for access, as well as the charity Aspens, Cornford House Nursing Home, a number of other businesses, and the residential properties and farm down High Woods Lane.

My understanding is that the key issues are:

- Vehicles driving too fast for the narrow roads making it dangerous for other vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders
- Occasional accidents due to the above
- Large vehicles attempting to drive down the lanes that are not suitable for HGVs or other large vehicles
- Large vehicles ignoring the “no HGV” signs on Cornford Lane
- Damage to the verges and flora & fauna

I have already mentioned that I do not believe a viable solution is to close either of the lanes as this would increase traffic on Pembury Road, an already heavily congested road, and create access problems to properties and businesses on Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road.

When the Friends of Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road have produced a report detailing the issues and providing a number of carefully considered options to alleviate the issues, I would support the creation of a time limited working group to consider the options. The working group would need to include, as a minimum, representatives from Hawkenbury, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, KCC Highways, TWBC, the Friends of Cornford Lane and Halls Hole Road and Aspens to consider the options in the broader context of the surrounding communities and roads. I would expect the output of the working group to produce a set of recommendations that may or may not draw on the original options presented to the working group.

This is my recommendation for a way forward.”

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- There had been several assertions made that the JTB and Kent CC had done nothing which was a very unfair judgement.
- The JTB was not a decision making body, but had always welcomed hearing issues from residents. As a result of discussions at the JTB, Kent CC had undertaken numerous actions over the years to try and do what it could to address the concerns raised. Measures included, road narrowing's, visual reminders and wooden stakes and high kerbs to prevent further degeneration of the hedgerows. In addition, No HGV advisory signs had been installed.
- A traffic speed count survey was commissioned at the end of 2019. 7 speed count rubbers were installed. On 2 of them the average speed was over 30mph (43mph and 44mph), 4 of the speed counts were below 30mph and 1 was below 20mph.
- Any working party should include the wider community. It was suggested that the Chair should be a member of Kent CC. In addition it should include relevant stakeholders and Kent Highways Engineers.
- High Woods Lane instead of Cornford Lane was suggested as a good alternative route.
- As a non decision making body the JTB could only make recommendations, and in this case, those recommendations would have to be made to Kent Highways. They would then carry out due process that would ultimately have to be agreed by the relevant Kent CC Cabinet Member.
- Professional Highways Engineers had reviewed this issue on a number of occasions, but to date had not been able to come up with a suitable solution.
- Any recommendation that resulted in an increase in traffic on the Pembury Road should not be supported.
- Any recommendation that negatively impacted other residents and/or roads in the area should also not be supported.
- Traffic displacement was not the solution.
- Some form of restrictions for HGV's and vans might be something that could be supported.
- The Country was currently in a period of huge uncertainty and huge financial challenges to all Local Authorities. Any recommendation would have to be thoroughly costed and be affordable.
- It should be noted that Kent CC would have to make over £45m in savings over the next financial year. Any recommendations would have to be funded from the existing Highways budgets.
- Residents were not looking to close the road or to make it a private road.

- It was suggested that Kent CC officers were not needed in the initial stages of discussion, but it was recognised they were the decision makers and would therefore be required at a later stage.
- Local Ward Councillors should be included in any working group.
- Any potential solution for Cornford Lane must involve looking at the congestion problems on the Pembury Road.
- Experience seemed to suggest that signage alone did not deter drivers from using unsuitable roads as rat runs.
- There had previously been a recommendation for a 6 month trial to close Cornford Lane (2014). This had been met by significant opposition by the residents of Pembury – two petitions, one with over 1,000, the other with over 700 signatures were opposed to any closure.
- Outside rush hour, the road wasn't a problem.
- There was concern that establishing a working group would set a precedent for other residents associations, lobby groups etc. to ask for the same. This would be unsustainable.
- Anecdotal evidence was not sufficient reason to establish a working party.
- The issue needed to be looked at holistically and this included considering how to reduce the number of cars on the road.
- It was noted, Reynolds Lane was a very different set of circumstances to Cornford Lane. Reynolds Lane ran behind 3 schools and was not used as a cut through but as a school route. The current trial looked to encourage walking and cycling to and from school.
- Rat running, unsuitable vehicles and driving at inappropriate speeds was a problem Borough wide.
- Kent CC officers were aware that this issue had been looked at a number of times and made clear that they would only consider new evidence.
- Kent CC's position had not changed. There were currently no plans to revisit this issue.
- The Parishes and KALC Area Committee would be supportive of a working group.
- The Vice Chair of the JTB Board, Councillor Hamilton offered to Chair the working group should this recommendation go forward. But, any such group should have very clear Terms of Reference, it's remit should be very clear and no promises could be made. KALC should be represented and Highways Engineers, who were the professionals must be included.
- An agreed Terms of Reference should be in place before consideration could be given to the setting up of a working group. A draft Terms of Reference should be circulated and agreed prior to the next JTB meeting.
- Kent CC officers reiterated that their services had to be prioritised and if there was no new evidence then it was unlikely they would be able to support a working group.
- The key people to draft the Terms of Reference were Highways Engineers and Kent CC Councillors. For expedience it was preferable to keep the group small.
- A draft Terms of Reference that would set out:
  - o What the group hoped to achieve;
  - o What the make up of the group should be;
  - o What were the aims and objectives
- The draft would have to be agreed by officers to ensure what was being proposed was achievable.

- It was proposed to ideally send the draft out for comment (by email) by the end of February 2021.

**RESOLVED** - Councillor Hamilton and Councillor Rankin along with Kent CC Officers would discuss and draft Terms of Reference. The draft Terms of Reference would then be circulated to Members of the JTB Board for comment (ideally by the end of February 2021). Subject to the outcome a decision on next steps would then be taken.

## NEAR MISS REGISTER

TB19/20 Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager introduced a report that asked the JTB to consider the potential of a Near Miss Register which included the following comments:

- A motion at Full Council in February 2020 put forward a request for the cost, means and viability of establishing and maintaining a near-miss register to cover the roads in Tunbridge Wells.
- This would comprise of:
  - o A data base of near misses.
  - o A means to report near misses.
  - o The staff time and associated costs to establish and run the register.
  - o Integration of other data such as killed and seriously injured records.
- The implementation of a simple register would be easy to maintain and costs would be low. It would take an officer approximately two days to build and deploy the application and a further day to create the content and publish a web page.
- The success of a register would be dependent on the data submitted and therefore there was some concern as to whether the information received would result in changes to behaviour and improved safety.
- There was also concern that the register could be misused and there was the issue of the subjective accuracy of reporting.
- TWBC's Community Safety Team would overlay the data with slight, killed and seriously injured data that was collected annually as part of the strategic assessment process.
- Kent Highways Team were happy for TWBC to produce a quarterly report to the crash data team which could then be reviewed with other collision data. However it should be noted that although the data might be useful exercise over the longer term, it would not necessarily improve or change the work they currently undertook with regards to casualty reduction measures.
- TWBC could use the data for other purposes, such as exercises in awareness.

Councillor Rands had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

"I last spoke on this matter in February when full council voted to it to the JTB. I must thank the officers who have in the intervening months worked on this project and come up with a cheap and easily implemented proposal.

I appreciate there will be scepticism in some quarters as to how a near-miss register will work. I note the report we have before us is lukewarm. I find that

odd, because use of a near miss register has become the norm in many industries.

So what is it? We record the accidents that almost happen. A driver has to conduct an emergency stop to avoid hitting a pedestrian who steps into the road – that's a near miss. A pedestrian has to jump back onto the pavement – that's a near miss. There isn't some mathematical formula we can use like if a car comes within 10cms it's a near miss but if it's 11 it's okay. There's a subjective judgement to be made and that's absolutely fine because most people are neither insane nor idiots. You know if an event was close to being an accident. And if there is the occasional dubious report it doesn't matter. It would be very unusual indeed to act on a singular report. It is really that we would build a body of evidence and look for patterns e.g. lots of near misses in a single area or at a particular time of day. Once you have that data we can start to look at why there is an issue.

It may be that we as TWBC can address that issue ourselves e.g. improving visibility by removing a parking space or trimming back branches. It may be that we can simply warn the public that there is an issue. Or it may be that we need to go to KCC, but we can go with the evidence.

One potential objection is cost, but the plan provided is cheap. The biggest expense is likely to be publicising the scheme, but actually as you can see from Friday's Courier there is support for this and we can get our message out through local media. It's also worth saying that the commonly accepted figure for the cost of the state dealing with a death by dangerous driving is one million pounds. That includes investigation, court cases, jailing and imprisonment. Humanitarian concerns aside preventing a death is cheaper than waiting for one to happen.

One of the last jobs I had in the Army was with the defence safety authority. We investigated deaths and serious accidents primarily in training. One thing that was very obvious was that in most cases there had been a series of similar incidents which preceded the fatal incident and in retrospect it was obvious there was an issue. Initiating a near miss register would help us pick up on those warning signals before we have a death or serious injury."

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- The report included details of the experience in Lincolnshire and showed that it hadn't been well used and had contributed little.
- A near-miss could be interpreted in a number of ways and was therefore difficult to quantify.
- It was suggested the scheme was an unnecessary burden to place on officers.
- The proposed scheme would be based on anecdotal evidence and would therefore be open to abuse.
- Decisions at Kent CC were evidence based, taken from police statistics on road accidents and recordings.
- Additional questions could be put to those reporting near-misses e.g. was the incident subject to an insurance claim, photographic evidence etc.
- Evidence could be linked in with published data e.g. Crashmat.co.uk.
- Any measures that could be used to improve the Council's understanding of the types of incidents that were occurring would be beneficial.

- There was concern as to whether Kent CC had the resources to deal with the information they would receive from the register.
- There was concern that residents expectations would be raised if a number of near-misses were registered and that resources would be available for mitigation measures to be implemented.
- To note, the Crash Map data for the last 5 years showed no fatalities in Tunbridge Wells.
- Residents should be encouraged to report incidents and to become more aware of road safety issues in their area.
- The Transport Intelligence Team that lead and manage crash data at Kent CC had confirmed they would be happy to receive a quarterly report from TWBC.
- It was suggested the scheme be run as a pilot – a year would be a reasonable length of time to test.
- This sort of scheme had been successfully used in other industries and as a result, incident numbers had dropped.
- If other parts of the County expressed an interest in creating a near-miss register, it would increase the burden for Kent CC officers and would likely become unmanageable.
- A one year trial was the preferred option.

A vote was requested by the Chair of the JTB

Those in favour of a one year trial = 9

Those against a one year trial = 3

**RESOLVED:** That the near-miss register be subject to a one year trial.

## **HIGH WOODS LANE, HAWKENBURY - PARKING ISSUES**

TB20/20 Nick Baldwin, Senior Engineer introduced a report that recommended the advertising of a Traffic Regulation Order for additional waiting restrictions on High Woods Lane, Hawkenbury which included the following:

- Permit parking for residents was introduced in two stages for residents in Hawkenbury – early in 2018 and with a subsequent extension in 2020.
- A single yellow line was introduced on one side of the carriageway in High Woods Lane.
- Residents of High Woods Lane had asked for further restrictions including the status of the verge where the new restrictions would apply.
- Subject to agreement by the Board, TWBC would contact the residents who would be affected by parking in the Lane. Depending on the views expressed, a proposal for additional restrictions would be brought forward.

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- All the houses in this road benefited from some form of off street parking, so on street parking issues did not apply.
- The proposed restrictions would be introduced on the side of the carriageway with no houses.
- It was unclear as to the reasons for the proposed introduction of these



measures.

- Employees of AXA would be further disadvantaged if parking restrictions were introduced.
- It was suggested that only one resident had objected to vehicles parking on this stretch of road.
- The proposal was not to introduce permit parking in High Woods Lane. It would be a single yellow line which would apply for a short period during the day.
- Parking along the lane had resulted in the verges being churned up and in places, impeded passage.
- Representations had been received from owners/users of the allotment as parking had become more difficult.

The Chair requested a vote:

Those in favour to endorse the proposal: 2

Those against the proposal: 6

Those who abstained: 4

**RESOLVED:** The Board voted against the proposed proposal to advertise for a Traffic Regulation Order for additional waiting restrictions on High Woods Lane.

## PERMIT PARKING ZONE C EXPANSION CONSULTATION

TB21/20 Nick Baldwin, Senior Engineer introduced a report to recommend a formal consultation on the proposal to expand Permit Parking Zone C which included the following:

- In 2017 a report to the JTB recommended an extension to Permit Parking in Zone C. The implementation was subject to an issue with the existing zone which was not resolved so no further action was taken at the time.
- An informal resurvey of the original proposal had now been conducted. The report provided an update of residents views.
- The outcome of the survey showed that although the volume of support was broadly similar to that given in 2017, more people had responded with the result that in the area previously proposed for restrictions, although the majority were still in favour it was more finely balanced.
- The next step would be to formulise the proposal and undertake a consultation.

Mr Hugh Hennebry, member of the public had registered to speak and provided the following statement:

“Some time ago there was a proposition that one side of the road on Molyneux Park Road would have yellow lines on it to stop parking. Although this sounds well-intentioned, it could cause a real and significant danger to cars, bikes and pedestrians.

The current arrangement of cars parked on both sides of the road slows traffic down, which is good, as there is often only width for one car, so they have to pause. If cars are only parked on one side it is likely that cars driving along the free side of the road will travel faster. The new 20mph restrictions are great, thank you. However, it is a very steep hill and cars travelling down

often exceed the speed limit.

The road is on a steep camber, as well as on a steep gradient. I believe the suggestion was that the lower side of the road (houses with odd numbers) would have parking and the higher side of the road (even numbers) would not allow parking. Exiting from a driveway which sits lower than the level of the road (odd numbers) is already a hazard, as parked cars currently block the view of the road and do not allow visibility of the road in either direction. Where the roadside parked vehicle is a van, or a high car e.g. a 4x4, this is exacerbated, especially if the emerging car is a normal height car. With an even greater number of cars trying to cram into fewer spaces (a number of the houses on the road are multi-occupancy) there will inevitably be cars over spilling exits to driveways and causing even worse visibility for cars attempting to exit a driveway from below the road level. This means cars will need to come into the main thoroughfare "completely blind". This will inevitably cause collisions with cars, cyclists and even pedestrians. This will be made worse when cars travel faster because of point 1. above. Do please come to see this situation for yourselves in morning traffic and you will see that this could have serious consequences. Molyneux Park Road is used by buses and many, many cars. It serves three schools (four, if you include drop off at TWGGS). It becomes extremely busy at school times and can be significantly congested when trying to exit at the top on Mount Ephraim. As it is a long, straight hill, it also has cars which travel along it (especially down it) far too fast for safety. If there are cars attempting to emerge from driveways between tightly packed parked cars with no visibility, which are also invisible to the drivers travelling along/down Molyneux Park Road, collisions are inevitable. Given that the collisions may also be with a vehicle travelling at, or exceeding, 20mph the outcome could well be disastrous. Cars could also swerve off the road to avoid a crash onto pavements that are frequented by school children walking to and from school, often with parents pushing buggies. The side of the road that cars drive down the hill and are more likely to speed, is the lower side of the road, where the travelling cars cannot see the driveways due to parked cars restricting their view, and the emerging cars cannot see the travelling cars for the same reason.

We think there shouldn't be one side of the road with all yellow lines but if the plan to restrict parking to just one side of the road is still being considered, it is of the utmost importance that it is the higher side (even numbers) of the road that allows parking and the lower side (odd numbers) that does not. Drivers driving off drives that are higher than the road they are joining do, at least, get to see whether there are cars travelling along the road or not."

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- It was important that those residents without driveways should be able to park relatively close to their properties.
- It was noted that the view of the residents association was that this scheme should be supported.
- The proposal included in the report was agreed.

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed to endorse the proposal to begin a formal consultation on the proposal to expand Permit Parking Zone C and report any objections to a future meeting of this Board.

## HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB22/20 Julian Cook, Tunbridge Wells District Manager at Kent CC introduced the Highways Works Programme that provided an update and summarised the schemes that had been programmed for delivery in 2019/20.

Discussion and responses to questions raised included the following:

- A report of flooding issues in the St David's Hill area of Cranbrook was not included in the programme as it was likely to be funded from the Reactive Budget. It was agreed that an update would be forwarded direct to Cllr Holden.
- The work accomplished in what was a very challenging and difficult time by the Kent CC team was to be applauded.
- The 20mph Zones detailed in Appendix H of the report were welcomed. However, a request was made for the inclusion of Royal Chase as part of the scheme. It was understood that because vehicle speeds were already below 30mph (28mph), the road did not qualify. It should be noted that police were unlikely to support an application to reduce the speed limit where average speeds were already below the posted speed limit. Kent CC agreed to report back on this issue.
- The consultation period for tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund had now closed. None of the 5 schemes included (and likely to be approved) were in the Tunbridge Wells area.
- Appendix E, included an entry for the realignment of the Heartenoak Junction in Hawkhurst. It was agreed that an update would be forwarded direct to Cllr Holden and Hawkhurst Parish Council.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

## TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB23/20 Comments were made in respect of the following matters:

- An update on a couple of the items raised at the last meeting:
  - o The bridge at High Brooms – Kent CC had now replaced the signing and the position was being kept under review.
  - o York Road/Dudley Road – Kent CC and TWBC had been in discussion about the Public Realm, including the issue of enforcement of the restrictions through Mount Pleasant, York Road and Monson Road. A report would come back to the JTB once a review had been undertaken.
- A request was made to bring Kent CC's response to the recent DfT consultation – 48 Tonne Intermodal Freight Trial consultation to the next JTB meeting. The proposal was to increase the standard maximum laden weight for 6 axle articulated lorries when on public roads from 44 tonnes to 48 tonnes.
- 2 topics had been submitted in writing by Councillor Scott and would be considered for a future meeting.
- There was a request for a standing item on Highways Improvement Plans (HIPs) so that they could be monitored at regular intervals.
- It was agreed that suggestions for future meetings that had been put forward be circulated to members of the Board for consideration.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

TB24/20      The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 19 April 2021 at 6:00pm.

**NOTES:**

The meeting concluded at 9.20 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.