

Cornford Lane, Tunbridge Wells – Traffic Options Consultation report on Road Closure

A report by the County Council's Director of Highways and Transportation to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 28 April 2014

Summary: This report presents Members with the results of the public consultation for traffic options for Cornford Lane, Tunbridge Wells. Members are asked to note the results of the consultation.

Recommendations: That the Board notes the results of the consultation.

1. Background

The residents of Cornford Lane have made representations at previous JTB meetings calling for the closure of Cornford Lane for the following reasons:

- The road is considered too narrow to accommodate the current level of two way traffic with regular traffic jams occurring on the narrowest sections
- The volume of traffic has increased since the installation of the lights
- The level of traffic has escalated to an extent where the safety of residents, walkers, cyclists and equestrians is being seriously compromised
- Extensive damage is being caused to the lanes' hedges and banks

At a previous Joint Transportation Board meeting held (21 October 2013) County Councillor James Scholes committed part of his discretionary Members Highway Fund to investigate options for the closure of Cornford Lane. Officers undertook this work with the lead residents of Cornford Lane.

Alternative traffic scheme were asked to be presented to the Joint Transportation Board meeting on 20th January alongside the closure proposal. These were put forward in the report and the scheme pros and cons outlined.

It was recommended at the Joint Transportation Board on 20th January 2014, that given mixed views which had been expressed by local residents, that a consultation should be carried out and reported to the next Joint Transportation Board to be held 28th April 2014. The Board also recommended that a public meeting be held to give local users of the road an opportunity to express their views.

2. Consultation

Due to the short time available to carry out the consultation, a public exhibition was proposed by officers to try to engage with local residents and regular users of the road. A short consultation paper was prepared and issued to all statutory consultees on Friday 28 February 2014. The consultation period ran from Monday 3rd March to Midday on Monday 24 March 2014.

The public exhibition was held at Pepenbury community café on Saturday 1st March between 10am and 4pm where 3 officers were present to talk through the options.

The consultation was published on the Kent County Council website on Monday 3 March 2014.

The consultation put forward 5 traffic options for Cornford Lane:

1a and 1b – Scheme with one-way sections

2 – Total road closure

3 – Traffic light scheme at the narrowest section of the road

4 – Traffic calming scheme with full width road humps

5 – Do nothing

Consultees were asked to give a first and second preference, to provide their name and address and if they belonged to an organisation.

A comment box was provided for consultees to make additional comments.

3. Results of the Consultation

In total 223 responses were received. 144 were received by e-mail and 79 by post. A number of responses were received which have not made a clear preference; these have been excluded from the results.

A small number of responses were received after the consultation deadline; these have been excluded from the results.

Organisation

Responses have generally associated with the following groups:

- Friends of Cornford Lane – These have been further split into Cornford Lane residents and non-residents
- Pepenbury
- Pembury Society
- Pembury Resident
- Friends of Dunorlan Park

We have utilised the provided information in the responses to place all responses in these categories and have also included the following groups:

- Tunbridge Wells residents – Where consultees have given a Tunbridge Wells address
- Non-residents – Where consultees have provided an address which does not fit into any other group.
- Cornford Lane residents – Where consultees have provided a Cornford Lane or Stafford Road address

Where responses have not provided an address this has been placed in the Non-resident group.

Members can arrange to view all the representations made if required however due to data protection regulations they will not be on display or available to the public.

Where consultees have put the same option for first and second – the second option has been discounted and recorded as no option given.

Responses from Non-residents Group

While processing the responses it became clear that a high number of responses, 87 (39%) were from the Non-resident group. Chart 1 shows the breakdown of addresses for this group.

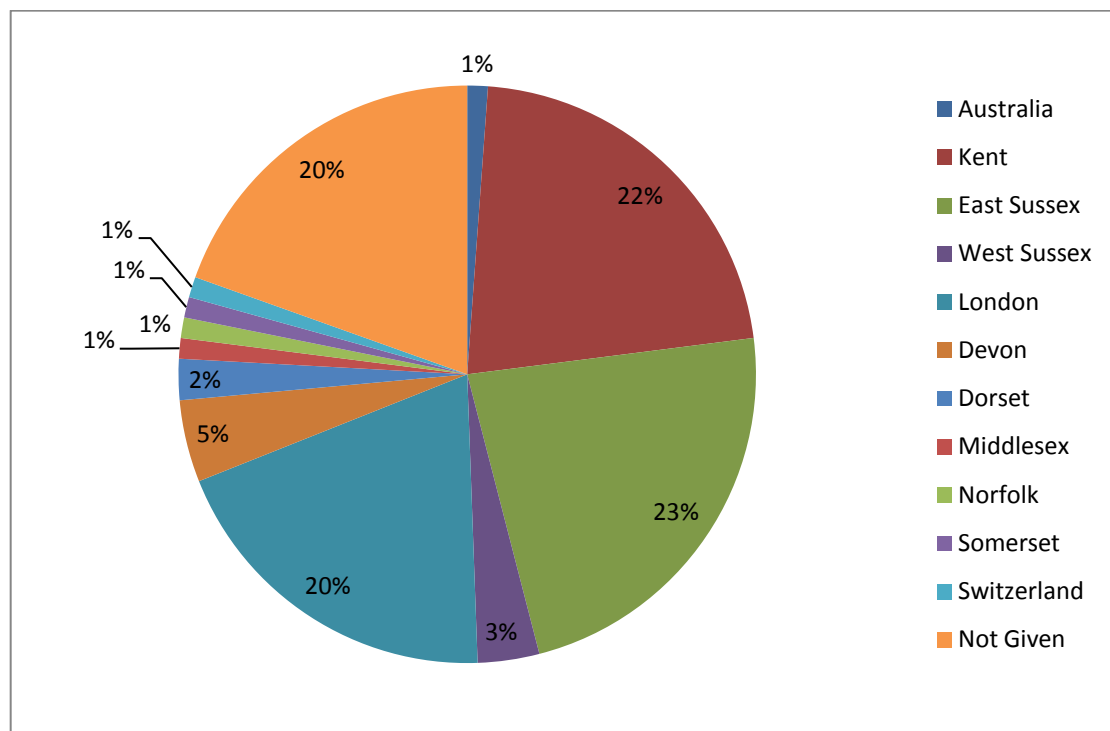


Chart 1 – Breakdown of addresses for Non-residents group

Responses from Residents Group

136 responses were received in the Residents category. The following groups have been included in this category:

- Friends of Cornford Lane – Residents only
- Pembury Society – Residents Only
- Tunbridge Wells Residents
- Pembury Residents
- Cornford Lane Residents
- Pepenbury
- Friends of Dunorlan Park – Residents Only

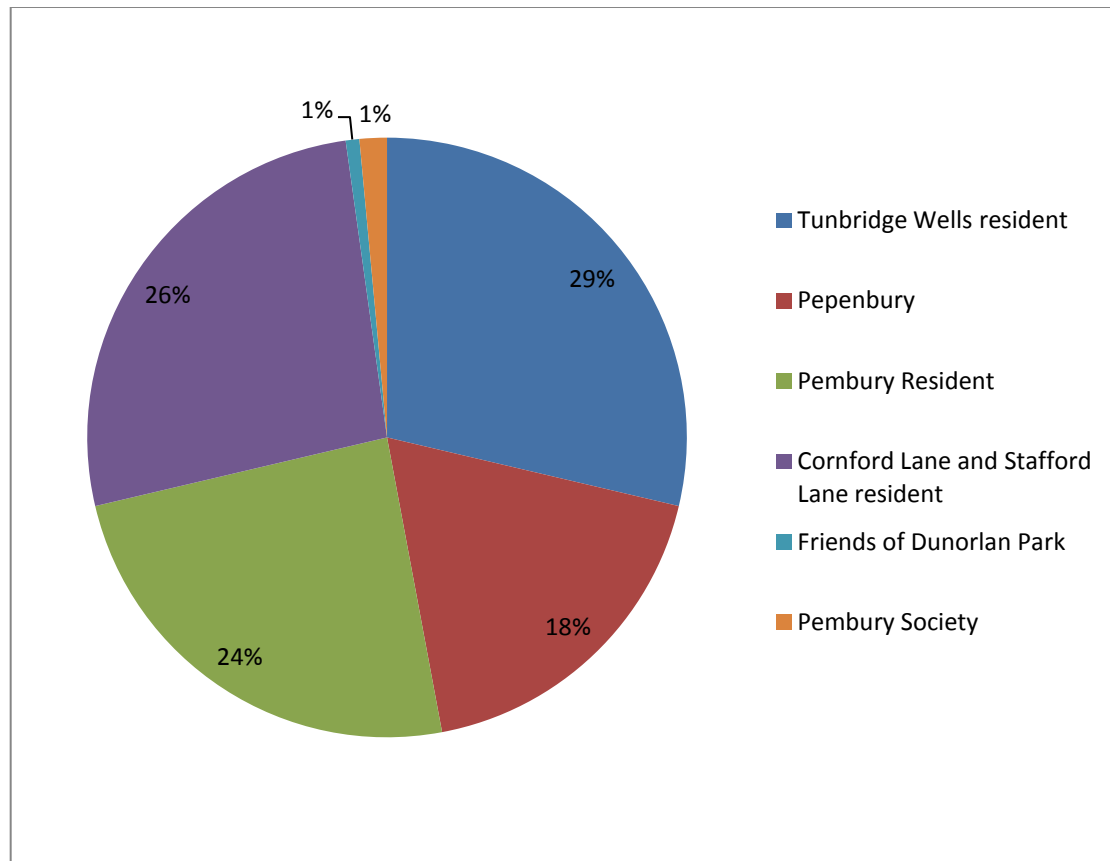


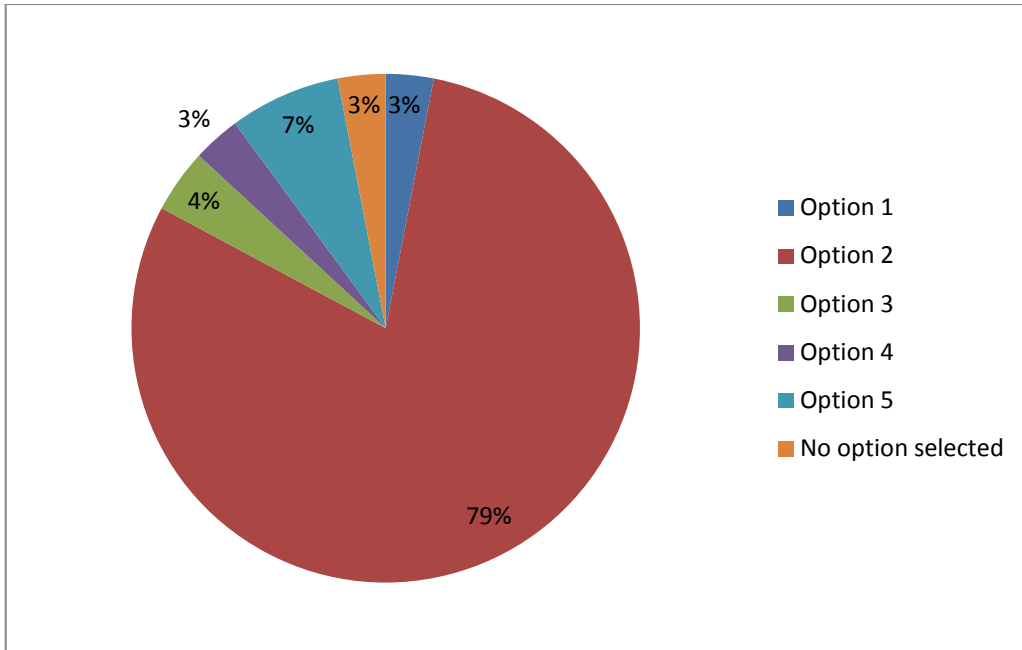
Chart 2 – Breakdown of responses by residents group

Results

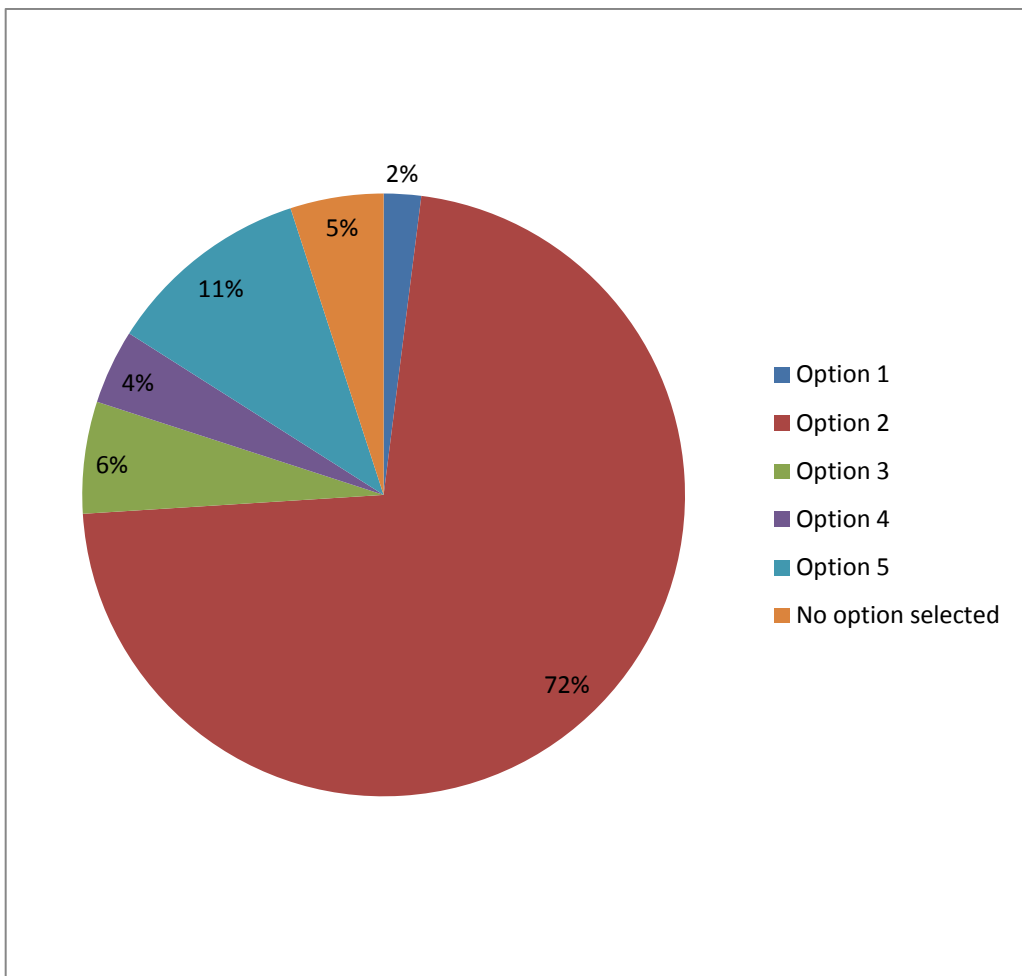
The preferred first option across all categories is Option 2 – Road Closure.

The first preferred option across residents groups only is Option 2 – Road Closure.

The responses are broken down in the following charts.



First preferred option breakdown for all responses (223)



First preferred option breakdown for residents Groups Only

145 (65%) responses did not select a second option across all categories therefore no second preferred option has been identified.

Comments received

Generally the comments received were additional information to further support the choices made by the consultees.

A general summary of comments which have made other suggestions are tabled below.

Table 1 – Alternative suggestions made as part of the consultation

	Category	Comment
1.	Resident – Tun Wells	Not keen on any of the options, can we have a 20mph speed limit with flashing signs and enforcement?
2.	Resident – Cornford Lane	Make the junction of Halls Hole Road and Pembury Road no right turn. Introduce yellow lines outside Dunorlan Park in Halls Hole Road
3.	Resident - Pembury	Why not install a single metal barrier half way down Cornford Lane
4.	Resident – Tun Wells	Remove the traffic lights on Pembury Road and install a roundabout
5.	Resident - Pembury	Install a width restriction
6.	Resident - Pembury	Install a width restriction
7.	Resident - Pembury	20mph speed limit with limited speed reduction features and no street lighting as a temporary measure while the rest of Tunbridge Wells gets sorted out.
8.	Resident - Pembury	Height or weight limit would be better
9.	Resident - Pembury	Sort the traffic lights system at the top of Halls Hole Road
10.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a barrier with access
11.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a width restriction and reduced speed limit with camera enforcement
12.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a 30mph speed limit, a 6ft 6in width restriction, widen the top of Halls Hole Road, install a pavement from Pepenbury to Pembury and install warning signs and slow markings.
13.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest linking the 2 existing public right of way footpaths to keep walkers off the lane with some land required
14.	Resident - Pembury	Gate or rising bollards can be remotely controlled by authorities could allow use in the event of an emergency if the road is closed.
15.	Resident - Pembury	A footbridge should be installed for Pepenbury and a pavement installed between Pepenbury and Pembury

16.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest traffic lights include both narrow bends of Cornford Lane and a width limit is installed.
17.	Resident - Pembury	Can we put a speed camera in?
18.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a 20mph speed limit along Cornford Lane and bus lay-bys along Pembury Road.
19.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest KCC buys the water tower land and install a roundabout at the top of Halls Hole Road
20.	Non Resident – East Sussex	It would be useful to have a copy of the TIA carried out in conjunction with the installation of the traffic lights at the junction of Halls Hole Road
21.	Resident – Tun Wells	Suggest a 30mph speed limit
22.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a 20mph speed limit with cameras
23.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest a width restriction
24.	Resident - Pepenbury	Suggest a no right turn out of Halls Hole Road
25.	Resident – Tun Wells	Suggest widening Halls Hole Road and a one way system being installed in Halls Hole Road and Cornford Lane
26.	Resident – Tun Wells	Suggest HGVS are banned from Halls Hole Road and Cornford Lane with an alternative one way system in Cornford Lane considered
27.	Resident – Cornford Lane	Suggest a weight restriction
28.	Resident - Pembury	Suggest the road is widened and a footpath provided
29.	Resident – Tun Wells	Suggest a speed limit reduction
30.	Resident – Cornford Lane	Suggest the traffic lights are removed and replaced with a roundabout
31.	Resident – Tun Wells	Build a path, improve the Pembury Road, build a bypass on the A21, improve Halls Hole Road and build a park and ride
32.	Non Resident – Norfolk	Average speed cameras may help or deter with a lower speed limit
33.	Non Resident – Not given	Suggest that more wooden posts are installed along the length of the lane. Provide a footpath at the Pembury end between Cornford Lane and Tesco's. Also a short length of footpath could be provided at the Halls Hole road end near the post box. Lobby Sat Nav providers.
34.	Resident - Pepenbury	Suggest a protected footpath along the road for pedestrians and power chair users

35.	Resident – Tun Wells	If the hedges were cut back and maintained this would improve visibility along the lane.
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Summary of objections* received to the preferred option - closure (Option 2) are tabled below:

*Please note these are in brief Members can arrange to view all the representations made if required however due to data protection regulations they will not be on display or available to the public.

	Category	Comment
1.	Resident – Tun Wells	Road closure would leave an even bigger queue along Pembury Road
2.	Resident – Tun Wells	We need to use the lane otherwise there is no alternative when Halls Hole Road gets very busy.
3.	Resident - Pembury	Closing the road is the worst response to the problem and would be madness. If the Lane was closed this would effectively add all the cars to the main road, which would exacerbate an already unbearable situation. If only a roundabout had gone in there, as was in the original planning permission, and the council hadn't rolled over to the wishes of a few residents of Blackhurst Lane
4.	Resident - Pembury	I use Cornford Lane regularly and we consider it to be a vital transport link between Pembury and Tunbridge Wells. As with most people who use smaller more minor roads I do not do so out choice, but rather through a lack of viable alternative
5.	Resident- Pembury	Lack of rationale for spending public money at a time of severe financial pressure. There are many more serious 'Rat runs' in Tunbridge Wells, none of which are programmed for consideration – Why?
6.	Resident - Pembury	It cannot be right to close a road for the benefit of a handful of properties. It must remain open for the use of Pembury and Hawkenbury residents which is approx. 6000 and the Pembury Road needs to be sorted out.
7.	Resident - Pembury	I have seen no evidence prepared by KCC on the severity and depth of the claimed problem. Cornford Lane is not unique in its limited width (in places) and its irregular contour. Can we therefore expect closure of other roads?
8.	Resident- Pembury	I have not in 1.5 years had any problems that would cause any justification for the road to be closed. The road only recently had work done on it, and the real issue seems to be with longer vehicles.
9.	Resident – Tun Wells	I fully accept that Cornford Lane is a narrow lane, but it is no narrower than hundreds, if not thousands of other narrow lanes in the country. It is an established right of way and to close it would cause significant difficulties for many current users.
10.	Resident - Pembury	It would be an absurd decision for KCC to respond to a traffic congestion issue on the Pembury Road by closing

		down alternative routes. By framing this as an issue confined to Cornford Lane KCC is doing disservice to the community it is there to represent.
11.	Resident - Pembury	Any money spent on Cornford Lane now would be wasted money. The question that needs answering is not “what to do with a country lane”, but how to implement proper traffic flow strategy for this side of Tunbridge Wells. Closure of this road would discourage even more people from going to Tunbridge Wells and this can only have a detrimental effect on the town’s economy. It will also remove the only alternative route if there were a major incident on the Pembury Road.
12.	Resident - Pembury	We have 6000 residents in our village who have used Cornford Lane for years – using it responsibly – It is traffic trying to get to work on time that use Cornford Lane out of desperation NOT CHOICE
13.	Resident - Pembury	Pembury Road needs solving first – Money should not be wasted on Cornford Lane at this stage. Cornford Lane is a public highway and an essential part of the road system for Tunbridge Wells. There are only a dozen houses in the affected area of Cornford Lane, and there are 6000 people in Pembury.
14.	Resident - Pembury	Over the past few years, Pembury School has been forced by KCC to add a third class to each year intake. This has added a further 30 children to the school, most of whom come in from outside of Pembury, mainly from Tunbridge Wells due to lack of spaces within the town’s schools.
15.	Resident – Tun Wells	I live in Hawkenbury and my children were sent to school in Pembury as there were no spaces in our area so I use this lane every day as it’s the direct route and using the main road adds an additional 20 min onto my journey.
16.	Resident - Pembury	I accept that at certain times, normally peak hours Monday – Friday this road causes some difficulty when cars pass in the narrower stretches, but other times is a quiet lane. Higher traffic levels are no excuse to close roads. This road has been maintained at tax payer expense and tax payers should continue to be able to use as a through route.
17.	Non Resident - Maidstone	Using the main road adds an additional 1.5 hours per day and if Cornford Lane was closed I would need to look for work elsewhere
18.	Resident – Tun Wells	The Pembury Road is frequently congested and Cornford Lane provides a viable alternative from Tunbridge Wells to Pembury for those pushed for time. Forcing even more traffic on to the Pembury Road will make it even more of a nightmare than it already is.
19.	Resident - Pembury	Any form of closure of a public highway for the benefit of eleven residents would be wrong, throughout Kent many people suffer from traffic passing their houses it is a fact of modern life. To close the road would only increase the

		traffic problem on Pembury Road.
20.	Resident - Pembury	Cornford Lane needs to remain open as an alternative route for traffic exiting Pembury village. The discretionary Member Highway Fund I consider would be better spent considering options to benefit all road users who use the Pembury Road.
21.	Resident - Pembury	I strongly object to road closure. The solution isn't to put even more traffic on Pembury Road.
22.	Non Resident – Not Given	I feel if the road was closed or if restrictions were put on the road it would make traffic even more diabolical in Tunbridge Wells than it already is.
23.	Resident – Tun Wells	Anything you do in Cornford Lane will only increase the problems on surrounding roads.
24.	Non Resident – Not given	Cornford Lane has been constructed and is maintained at public expense just like any other similar road In Kent and indeed throughout the whole country. Closing it to through traffic would create 2 private cul-de-sacs for the sole benefit of a small number of residents and disadvantage the majority of road users that currently enjoy the option of using the road as a through route. Closing the road would have a multiplying effect on the dire congestion problems Already affecting Pembury Road.
25.	Resident	It would appear to be an extreme response to close Cornford Lane for traffic problems at peak times.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the consultation results, a majority of local residents would like to see Cornford Lane closed to traffic.

6. Recommendations

All schemes funded through the Member Highway Fund are County Member lead and promoted. KCC Officers are directed by the County Member and are therefore themselves making no recommendation. It is James Scholes, as the County Member, who will ultimately make the recommendation as to how this is progressed.

James Scholes has made the decision to support Option 2 Road Closure. He has made the recommendation that KCC Officers progress to the next stage which will involve the following:

- detailed design and costing
- land dedication process
- construction and implementation of road closure under an Experimental Traffic Order.

The County Member has been advised to note that the road closure cannot be implemented prior to the construction of the required turning circles.

An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), as the name suggests, is experimental and advertised as a “MADE” traffic regulation order. It has a maximum life span of 18 months after which it must either be made permanent or abandoned. An ETRO has a minimum 6 months objection period after which it can be made or abandoned. During this six month period, all interested parties will be invited to respond to the consultation. Should there be more than five objections received during the minimum consultation period, they will be reported to the Joint Transportation Board who will be asked to consider those objections. The County Member will then make a decision on whether to convert the order to a permanent Traffic Regulation Order.

As detailed in the Consultation Document an approximate cost of the scheme is in the region of £20,000. This is likely to increase once the detailed design process is complete and the legal costs are known. Funding through the Member Highway Fund process (2013/2014) and the new Combined Community Grant system (2014/2015) is limited and may not cover the full cost of the scheme. Other funding avenues may need to be explored.

7. Contact details

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