Lees Road Parking Consultation Report
Combined Member Grant scheme on behalf of County Member George Koowaree

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1. **Research Content**
   1.1 Background
   1.2 The Proposals

2. **Consultation process and activities**
   2.1 Choosing the best way to inform the local community
   2.2 Consultation
   2.3 Alternative suggestions

3. **Equality Analysis**

4. **Next Steps**

5. **Acknowledgements**

**Appendix 1**
Consultation letter

**Appendix 2**
Plans of Proposals
1. Research Content

1.1 Background
As part of his Combined Member Grant, County Member George Koowaree requested Kent County Council (KCC) Highways to investigate solutions to issues raised by his constituents regarding the poor forward visibility for drivers travelling along Lees Road, Willesborough, Ashford. Perception was that visibility to vehicles travelling from the opposite direction is impaired due to vehicles parked under the M20 motorway bridge. Following meetings held with KCC and Ashford Borough Council (ABC) it was agreed to undertake a consultation to ascertain public opinion and to determine the most appropriate action to take. Two options and a no action choice were put forward to the local community.

1.2 The Proposals
The question ‘Do you consider parking in Lees Road to be a problem?’ was put forward in the consultation to gauge if the local community did consider there to be an issue with parked vehicles. For those who ticked yes, the following options were offered. Plans can be found in Appendix 2.

The options put forward for consultation were -

**Option 1 - Double Yellow Lines (DYL’s)**

This scheme would involve implementing double yellow lines, on both sides of the road, from the junction of Cornes Close along Lees Road to the existing bus stop. Double yellow line restrictions mean you cannot park at any time of day. There are however some exemptions to the restriction, these include stopping to load and unload goods and to drop off and pick up passengers. In addition, blue badge holders may park for up to 3 hours on a double yellow line, where it is safe to do so, when displaying their blue badge and parking disc.

**Option 2 - Extending the existing one way**

For this proposal we would look to extend the existing one way in Silver Hill Road from its junction with Winslade Way into Lees Road to the junction with Cornes Close. This scheme wouldn’t restrict vehicles from parking however it would prevent vehicles traveling southbound along Lees Road.
This would mean that residents would only be able to turn left out of Winslade Way and right out of Silver Hill Gardens.

A ‘no action’ option was also included on the feedback form and a choice to leave comments.

2. Consultation process and activities

2.1 Choosing the best way to inform the local community

To determine the most appropriate way of informing the local community about the proposals we reviewed the Mosaic profile for the quarter mile radius of Lees Road/M20 flyover.

Mosaic is a classification system designed by Experian to profile characteristics of the UK population. Each household in the UK is classified as belonging to one of 66 types, which fall into a broader range of 15 groups. These types and groups describe the residents in terms of their typical demographics, their lifestyle characteristics and their attitudes.

Usually for schemes of this size we would only consult with residents that front the road in question; however, as Option 2 was extending an existing one way, the impact of people affected would be greater. Therefore a quarter mile radius was chosen.
The profile shows that a third of the households (246 out of 731) are group F Senior Security who have an ‘above average’ preference for receiving information in the post which supported undertaking a leaflet drop. However, some of the other groups identified have a ‘below average’ or ‘low’ preference for post. Given the nature of the consultation it was felt that a letter drop would provide the most reliable way of ensuring that all local residents were aware of the consultation. A letter drop was made to 750 properties. – please see Appendix 1

An online questionnaire was made available on our website, www.kent.gov.uk/leesroadashford, as another way to respond. The Mosaic data suggested that, with the exception of group F, all other groups had an average preference for contacting the organisation online. This provided an easier and more cost effective way for consultees to respond, negating the need for scanning of the feedback form once received by KCC and the cost of postage.

Notices were erected on site directing the public to the online questionnaire for information on the consultation.

An email was sent to statutory consultees and other interested parties for their comments. Please see below a list of all consultees

- Ashford Borough Council
- Kent Police
- Kent Ambulance
- Kent Fire and Rescue
- Road Haulage Association
- Freight Transport Association
- Stagecoach Bus Company
- William Harvey Hospital
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

The consultation started on 11th January 2016 and ran until 14th February 2016.
2.2 Consultation response

146 responses were received from the consultation 66.4% of which preferred Option 1 and 21.2% were in favour of Option 2. 10.3% objected or selected ‘no action’ as they thought there was not an issue at this location or the proposals would cause more issues then solve.

126 of the 146 responses where via email or postal, the other 20 were from our online questionnaire.

Of the residents in the immediate vicinity of Lees Road, High Trees Close, Silver Hill Road, Silver Hill Gardens, Cornes Close and Winslade Way we received 42 responses. 71% of residents preferred Option 1, 23.8% preferred Option 2. 4.8% objected to the scheme as they felt parking was not an issue.

22.6% of the responses received raised concerns that the parking issue was caused by commuter drivers, specifically from the William Harvey Hospital. Please see below some of the comments received –

‘Roads in Willesborough shouldn’t be used as an extension of WHH car park’
‘It’s unfair inconveniencing over 20 households to go extra miles for sake of WHH staff not using their own car park’
‘Since WHH staff have started parking there - it's become a problem’
‘If Staff Permits were given to WHH staff then there would be not need to park in Lees Road’

Kent Police responded with ‘no objection’ to the scheme as long as complies with The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 and does not leave them with the task of carrying out constant enforcement.

Stagecoach support measures being taken to deal with the parked vehicles at this location and are happy for us to proceed with either option.
2.3 Alternative suggestions

*Reducing the existing speed limit to 20mph* – This was not considered as part of the proposal. To investigate a change in a speed limit we would first need to carry out a traffic survey to ascertain the existing vehicle speeds. Physical measures may be required to calm traffic which can be very costly and are not suitable in all locations.

*Installing the double yellow lines on one side of the road only* – The scheme was presented to Kent County Council due to the safety concerns from the local community caused by parked vehicles. Having restrictions on one side of the road will relocate the problem not remove it.

*Reduce the width of the existing footway to allow for off road parking* – This scheme would be very costly and cause a great deal more disruption to residents. We would also need to liaise with the Highways England to ensure the works could not compromise the M20 flyover. The scale of works that are required were beyond the scope of the scheme.

*Single yellow lines with resident parking permits* – Single yellow lines with time restrictions will require more enforcement from the Ashford Borough Council to ensure vehicles are abiding with the restrictions. Unfortunately Ashford Borough Council does not have the funds or resource to be able to support the enforcement.
3. **Equality Analysis**

The Equality Impact Assessment for the scheme was published on the consultation website as one of the consultation documents.

No information received from the consultation has affected our equality assessment however this is a live document and will continue to be monitored and amended where required.

Two of the responses received did highlight concerns for the safety of children crossing in the vicinity, this has been noted.

4. **Next steps**

The results of the consultation have been discussed with the County Member, KCC Schemes Project Engineer and Ashford Borough Council. The County Member, George Koowaree, has decided to go ahead with a statutory consultation for Option 1 double yellow lines.

The statutory consultation will be advertised in the local KM. Notices will be placed on site and full details will be made available on our website.

The local community will have the opportunity to provide feedback to the consultation either to support of object to the proposals. If a large number of objections are received, the scheme will be reported to the Ashford Joint Transportation board for a recommendation as to whether or not to proceed with the scheme as advertised.

5. **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all who took the time to take part in our consultation and provide valuable feedback to assist in making the appropriate decision in how to move forward.