Introduction
The A26 is a main road connecting Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Tonbridge and is subject to heavy traffic flows, especially at peak times.

Much of the route is also a designated Air Quality Management Area. A solution is required to encourage more cycling use along the route which would contribute towards reducing congestion and improvements in air quality and health.

Kent County Council (KCC) is proposing to install a shared use pedestrian footway/cycleway on the A26 from Birchwood Avenue to Mabledon linking to the existing shared pedestrian / footway continuing through to Tonbridge.

Background
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) adopted its Cycling Strategy in March 2016. The Strategy encourages active travel and identifies the shared commitment of TWBC and KCC to provide an enhanced cycle route network.

The Cycling Strategy identifies a network of routes within the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook which require implementation and/or improvement.

These are set out in priority order. Route 1 - Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells town centres via the A26 is the highest priority as it is an inter-urban corridor that connects Tunbridge Wells town centre with Southborough, other prominent residential communities and secondary schools. Once complete it is hoped that the route will link with Route 8 - A26 London Road to Dowding Way via Barnetts Wood as well as Route 5 – 21st Century Way.

What are we proposing?
In late 2016 KCC carried out a six-week public consultation, in partnership with TWBC, on proposed improvements to the existing cycle route on the A26, between Tonbridge (Brook Street junction) and Tunbridge Wells (Grosvenor Road junction). Information can be viewed on our website www.kent.gov.uk/a26cycleroute.

The scheme was split in to three sections / phases:
- Proposal 1 (phase 1) – Grosvenor Road to Yew Tree Road
- Proposal 2 (phase 2) – Yew Tree Road to Bidborough Ridge
- Proposal 3 (phase 3) – Bidborough Ridge to Brook Street
KCC are now proposing to incorporate an additional length of shared surface cycle route and footpath along the A26 from junction with Birchwood Avenue to Mabledon by widening the existing footpath.

This design was chosen as there is insufficient carriageway width to allow for a 1.5m segregated cycle route on either side of the carriageway. This will link to the existing shared pedestrian / cycle route that continues through to Tonbridge.

The scheme plan (split into three sections) can be found at the end of this document or from our website.

The scheme will include:
- Improved signage on existing routes
- Shared use pedestrian/cycle footways
- Widened and re-aligned footways and kerbs on A26 from the junction of Birchwood Avenue to Mabledon
- Re-surfacing and more level footways

The cycle route design will meet all national minimum design standards, including:
- Widening of the existing footpaths to a minimum of 2.5m
- The installation of shared pedestrian footway/cycleway signage throughout the length of the route
- The relocation of existing sign posts and street furniture to ensure pedestrian and cyclist movement is relatively unobstructed.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken to assess the possible impacts of this scheme on people with protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The EqIA will be updated after the consultation to take into account any relevant information received. The EqIA can be viewed on our website and is available in hard copy on request (see details below).

**What is a shared use pedestrian/cycleway?**
A shared use footway/cycleway is a wide footpath that has been designated permissible for cycle use as well as pedestrians. On a shared use facility, all permitted users have equal access; it does not have separate cycle lanes and footways marked out.

**Have Your Say**
We would like to give you an opportunity to let us know what you think of this proposal and we invite you to complete the consultation questionnaire, which is available on our website www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecyclerooute.
If you have any questions regarding these proposals or require hard copies please email traffic.schemes@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 41 81 81.

Please use the reference ‘Birchwood Avenue Cycleway Consultation’ to identify the scheme.

**The closing date for this consultation is midnight Sunday 11th March 2018.**

**Next Steps**
Following the consultation a report will be compiled summarising the analysis of the responses. This report will be made available to consultees. The consultation responses and EqIA will be used to inform the decision on whether to proceed with this scheme.

If the decision is taken to proceed our intention is to start onsite in August 2018. Depending on weather conditions the build should take approximately 20 weeks to complete.

**Alternative formats**
If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call 03000 421553 (text relay service number: 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.
New shared use pedestrian footway/cycleway
A26 from junction of Birchwood Avenue to Mabledon
Public Consultation 12 February to 11 March 2018

Scheme plan, section 1 – Birchwood Avenue heading towards Tonbridge on A26

The green circles on the plan identify protected trees.

The red blocks on the highway show where there are speed limit roundals (painted markings on the road).

The scheme plan can be viewed in PDF from the consultation website www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecycleroute where you will be able to zoom in and out of the image to increase the size of the text.
The red blocks on the highway show where there are speed limit roundals (painted markings on the road).

The scheme plan can be viewed in PDF from the consultation website [www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecyclerroute](http://www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecyclerroute) where you will be able to zoom in and out of the image to increase the size of the text.
Scheme plan, section 3 – Mabledon heading towards Tonbridge on A26

The green circles on the plan identify protected trees.

The red blocks on the highway show where there are speed limit roundals (painted markings on the road).

The scheme plan can be viewed in PDF from the consultation website [www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecycleroute](http://www.kent.gov.uk/birchwoodavecycleroute) where you will be able to zoom in and out of the image to increase the size of the text.