



CRANBORNE AVENUE IN MAIDSTONE - PROHIBITION OF ENTRY EXPERIMENTAL ORDER

- SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

PREPARED BY LAKE MARKET RESEARCH



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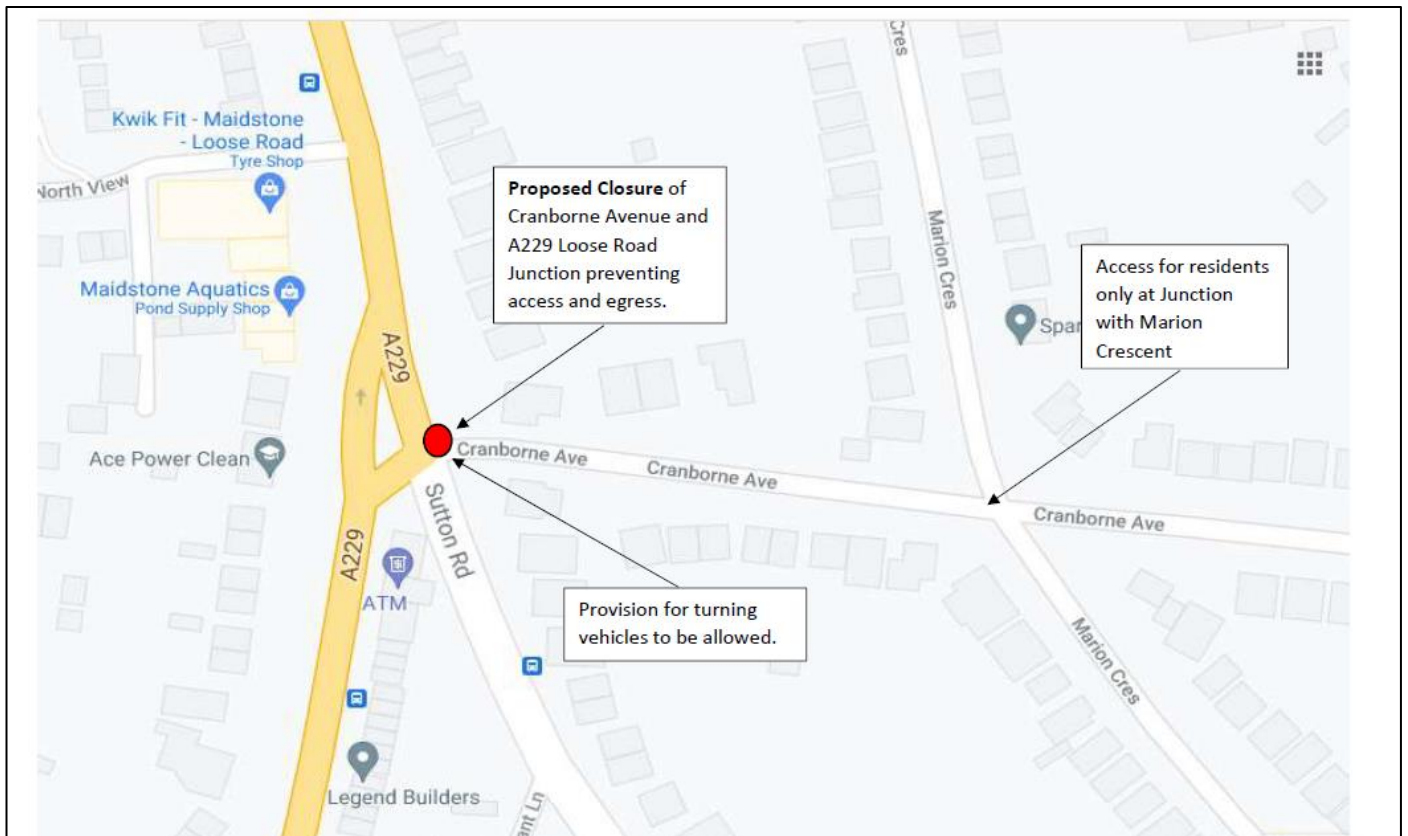
BACKGROUND

An Experimental Order for Cranborne Avenue was put into place in March 2022 to stop vehicles from driving into Cranborne Avenue, Maidstone. It was expressed that the Order was made for the following reasons:

- avoid the danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any other road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.
- for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs.
- for facilitating the passage on the road or any other road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians).

The Order came into effect on the 25 March 2022 on an experimental basis for a period of eighteen months. The Kent County Council consultation directory, Let's Talk Kent, indicated the scheme will be reviewed so that the Council can make the decision to make the Order permanent, amend or abandon it.

Details, including the scheme plan, could be found in the Public Notice and Statement for Reason document on the Let's Talk Kent consultation page. Any person wishing to object or support the Order before it is made permanent was asked to complete a response form available to download on the consultation directory between 18 March 2022 and 19 September 2022. A site plan for the Order can be found below:



Points to note:

- The response form allowed those accessing it to indicate whether they supported or objected to the Order and an open box to provide reasons for their answer.
- This report summarises the number of response form submissions and how many indicated support or objections to the Order. Accompanying verbatim comments have been reviewed in full. This report summarises the main reasons put forward for supporting or objecting to the Order.
- Participation in exercises such as these is self-selecting and this needs to be considered when interpreting responses.
- Response to this exercise does not wholly represent the local population of the Order's geography and is reliant on awareness and propensity to take part based on the topic and interest.
- KCC was responsible for the design, promotion, and collection of the consultation responses. Lake Market Research was appointed to conduct a written summary of feedback received via the response form.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

96 responses were submitted to Kent County Council via the response form.

It should be noted that one of the submissions received via the response form contained a road closure petition with 169 signatures. The petition was submitted as a record of unhappiness and disagreement with the closure of Cranborne Avenue and requests the closure is withdrawn. It noted that if their request was ignored, they wanted Marion Crescent to be closed either at the junction with Plains Avenue or the junction with Cranborne Avenue to stop Marion Crescent becoming a 'rat run' for traffic. The petition contained signatures from residents of Marion Crescent, Cranborne Avenue, Brockenhurst Avenue and Plains Avenue.

SUPPORT

23 of the 96 responses submitted via the response form indicated support for the Order (24%).

The main reasons put forward by those supporting the Order are:

- The Order will provide / has provided improvements to junction flow along Sutton Road / Loose Road / traffic getting through junction;
- Cranborne Avenue was perceived to be used as a rat run by significant amounts of traffic prior to closure notice / used by vehicles that are not suitable for the width of the road (e.g. HGVs);
- A safer environment for local residents in Cranborne Avenue;
- A less polluted environment for local residents in Cranborne Avenue.

OBJECTIONS

73 of the 96 responses submitted via the response form indicated objections to the Order (76%).

The main reasons put forward by those objecting to the Order are:

- Cranborne Avenue closure has / will transfer traffic to nearby estate roads / Marion Crescent / Plains Avenue which are already congested with traffic and parked cars;
- Safety concerns / risk of accidents turning right at Plains Avenue towards town centre and a perception that the closure of Cranborne Avenue is increasing traffic and making this situation worse.

Other concerns raised also include:

- Cranborne Avenue closure has / will increase the journey times of local residents / residents in the immediate area (including Marion Crescent, Ringwood Road, Cranborne Avenue)

- Cranborne Avenue closure has / will have implications for traffic trying to turn into Plains Avenue from town centre / turning left out of Plains Avenue to A229
- Safety concerns for children / elderly / residents of neighbouring roads due to increased congestion / speeding traffic / local roads used as 'rat runs' (including Plains Avenue, Ringwood Road)
- Concerns regarding pollution as a result of increased congestion and longer journey times
- Concerns about access / speed of access for emergency service

RESPONSE FORM FEEDBACK – SUPPORT FOR ORDER

23 of the 96 responses submitted via the consultation order indicated support for the Order (24%).

Consultees were asked to indicate whether they supported or objected to the Order and provide feedback for their opinion in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed comments made and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are outlined below, together with some example verbatims to demonstrate views:

Will provide / has provided improvements to junction flow along Sutton Road / Loose Road / traffic getting through junction (noted by 15 of the 23 indicating they support the Order)

“It provides a safer way to control traffic at this notorious junction. The closure will enable better free flowing traffic along Sutton / Loose Road and reduce the time waiting at the lights. The extra building at Langley park will add to the traffic problems quickly if it’s not resolved soon.”

“Fantastic idea - will improve junction flow. It is very easy to access Cranborne Avenue via Plains Avenue, so closing off Cranborne Avenue at the junction end isn't going to be problematic. It will also enable more active travel, more walking, more cycling etc.”

“The traffic is now dispersing, moving freely on other roads and not causing any congestion elsewhere, as far as i can ascertain. The Yellow box system at Loose Road /Plains Avenue junction is working fine and is much quicker than it ever was using Cranborne. The traffic flows on the Loose road in and out of the town are improved without the lights NOT operating at the end of Cranborne. The traffic flows on Loose road do need to keep moving in this much more freer way as this junction has also become more congested over recent years.”

“I am aware that many people who were against the closure worried about the displaced traffic clogging up the surrounding residential roads, but I can honestly say that this has not been the case. I believe those motorists that once used Cranborne Avenue as a cut through are probably now taking a completely different route and, what is even more likely, is that the traffic that used to clog up the 130 metres of the end of Cranborne Avenue, is now dispersed over a much larger area so that its addition to other roads is unnoticeable.”

“Quite often, at peak times, traffic has been queued back from the junction to a position past Marion Crescent, where vehicles wait to exit onto the main road.”

“Much to my surprise, in my opinion and in view of my 15 year experience of driving the same route, the volume of traffic heading down Marion Crescent has remained the same, if not less than it was before the closure. I am pleasantly surprised at this outcome. Even driving past the Wheatsheaf junction itself up the Loose Road seems to move easier. Quite often the yellow box junction would be blocked with cars struggling to get into the Loose Road. This too seems to have been alleviated with traffic moving easier.”

“Much of the traffic we used to endure seems to have dispersed through the Estate, which I feel is much fairer to the residents of Cranborne.”

“It makes sense to close Cranborne as the traffic lights stopping all flow of traffic for four cars (5 if count the car going through the amber light) coming out of Cranborne is really not necessarily and it will massively improve the flow of traffic to and from the town centre.”

Perception that Cranborne Avenue was used as a rat run by significant amounts of traffic prior to closure notice / used by vehicles that are not suitable for the width of the road (e.g. HGVs) (noted by 10 of the 97 indicating they support the Order)

“For a good many years now Cranborne Avenue has been a rat run for through traffic, some of which travels at an unnecessarily high speed. It's a narrow road, unsuitable for the number of vehicles using it and the road surface is in a very poor state. Quite often, at peak times, traffic has been queued back from the junction to a position past Marion Crescent, where vehicles wait to exit onto the main road.”

“Far too many residential roads in and around Maidstone, especially in the Loose area, are being used as rat runs due to increased traffic flow from all the housing developments being built. Infrastructure should come first, as should the foresight to predict which roads will be used as rat runs and out in place preventative measures to protect its residents before the housing developments are completed not years later!”

“As a resident of this road the improvement to our wellbeing is immeasurable, this road has become a total nightmare used day & night as a run & not just by speeding car drivers but HGVs as well. As an area built in the 1930s the roads are not designed for this amount of traffic & the road surface is in very poor repair & not designed to absorb noise.”

“Over the last two decades the amount of traffic using Cranborne Avenue as a means of exit /entry onto Loose road has become so excessive that at times this can queue back to the junction with Lyndhurst road. This narrow 1930's built road was not constructed for such amounts of traffic. The noise level from the unsuitable road surface has risen with the traffic increase. In short it can be chaos. This is all because drivers have chosen this road as an easy 'rat run' without being encouraged to disperse by other routes until now.”

“It was clear, immediately after the closure, that Cranborne Avenue had become a rat run to avoid the main routes because the volume of traffic has disappeared from across the estate. Although we suffer some inconvenience taking alternative routes we have not seen the volumes of traffic that the doom merchants said would go elsewhere.”

A safer environment for local residents in Cranborne Avenue (noted by 9 of the 23 indicating they support the Order)

“I can now sleep with my windows open because I know I will not get woken up by the noise of vehicles idling outside my house whilst waiting for the 9 second green light at the traffic lights. I no longer have to endure the cacophony of clunky lorries, cars and even worse motorbikes accelerating to get through the lights or turning into the road using it as a speed test area. The road is far too narrow to support the amount of traffic that used to use it as a rat run. The neighbours can now cross the road without the fear of a speeding cars and after losing two cats over the years directly outside my house I feel my present ones can live without having to negotiate the busy road. Please keep the road closed off.”

“The lack of real infrastructure to support this means that for some existing residents, their daily lives are being negatively impacted by speeding traffic causing potential danger to them and their property not to mention the verbal abuse they are often met with from drivers using these roads as cut throughs.”

“People speed out of Cranborne Avenue turning right towards town and I have witnessed people almost getting run over as all the other traffic is at red lights and unknowing pedestrians risk crossing when they shouldn't as people coming flying out of Cranborne Avenue at speed.”

“As a resident of Cranborne Avenue, we have to deal with a large amount of traffic using our road as a cut through. Much of this traffic turns into Cranborne Avenue at high Speed and is very dangerous to residents simply walking out of their front doors. Thus the closure is very welcome and hopefully permanent.”

“The closure has made a significant positive impact on the quality of our lives, in terms of the reduction of noise and air pollution. Over recent years we have had to face queues outside our house for several hours during each rush hour period and at other times during the day. This has meant that it could take us 10 minutes to get from our drive and out of Cranborne Avenue during the busy periods and also struggle to get back in, either having to pull across queuing traffic or join a queue to cover the last 10 metres to pull into our drive.”

A less polluted environment for local residents in Cranborne Avenue (noted by 6 of the 23 indicating they support the Order)

“The pollution levels are very noticeable from fumes by traffic waiting long times to exit the Avenue and congestion makes this worse by the vehicles trying to come into the Avenue from the Loose Road end.”

“Ever since I was a child, I have been aware of the noise, particulate and other pollution of the A229, which is inescapable due to the traffic waiting at the traffic lights on Cranborne Avenue, the canyon-effect (due to Cranborne Avenue being a much narrower road compared to the surrounding roads), as well as the 24/7 rat running. As a matter of fact, national data has shown that the Wheatsheaf junction is one of the most polluted areas in the whole country.”

“From day one of the closure, I immediately noticed a massive decrease in noise through my bedroom window, air quality has also significantly improved. The area feels peaceful for the first time since I can remember. A benefit of the reduced noise is that I've actually heard a woodpecker in my garden through my bedroom window for the first time ever!”

RESPONSE FORM FEEDBACK – OBJECTIONS TO ORDER

73 of the 96 responses submitted via the consultation order indicated objections to the Order (76%).

Consultees were asked to indicate whether they supported or objected to the Order and provide feedback for their opinion in their own words. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed comments made and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are outlined below, together with some example verbatims to demonstrate views:

Cranborne Avenue closure has / will transfer of traffic to nearby estate roads / Marion Crescent / Plains Avenue which are already congested with traffic and parked cars (concern noted by 44 of the 97 providing a comment)

“For people in the affected areas, the fact that the traffic lights at Parkway do not allow a right turn towards the town centre, we will be forced to head through the busy estate and use alternatives, such as roads along the back of Maidstone Boys Grammar School and The Mote Park Leisure Centre. Again these are already busy and I doubt the extra traffic would be welcomed by the residents of those areas.”

“As long term residents of this area, we experience the results of a huge increase in traffic congestion on a daily basis and are well equipped to accurately predict where the current plans will present major issues, rather than solutions. The closure of Cranborne Avenue will simply re-direct traffic to existing bottle necks and inevitably create further traffic congestion in busy side roads, with on street parking and at already clogged junctions. How these plans are supposed to improve traffic flow and reduce pollution is beyond the comprehension of anybody who lives in the area.”

“Because this road is very well used, in both directions. What happens if there's a holdup or major accident on the Loose Road? These other roads will become even more congested.”

“I envisage long queues in Plains Avenue as a result of this closure as you are not putting any kind of traffic control at the Plains Avenue/Loose Road junction.”

“This will increase traffic (and pollution) along other routes, specifically Sutton Road which is already congested enough. Will also increase traffic along Plains Avenue trying to access the Loose Road which is already difficult enough to join the flow of traffic.”

“Marion Crescent will become a cut through and there are always parked cars on the road, This will cause more traffic and delays.”

“I live along Marion Crescent. To have to pull out into two/four lanes of busy and fast traffic is horrid. I have not noticed one single difference to the traffic on the loose road at all, yet my road is busier as well as the surrounding roads, the smaller roads, not built or even very well maintained for the traffic they had.”

“As a resident of Cranborne Avenue, I have had to use an alternative route in and out to the A229 for the experimental period. To go towards Maidstone involves either the almost impossible crossing of the main road out of Plains Avenue to turn right towards the town or driving through the residential estate to Park Way.”

Safety concerns / risk of accidents turning right at Plains Avenue towards town centre and a perception that the closure of Cranborne Avenue is increasing traffic and making this situation worse (concern noted by 48 of the 97 providing a comment)

“This current proposal is likely to redirect that traffic to the junction of the Plains Avenue and Loose Road. This junction is already dangerous. Despite having a box junction (largely ignored) egress is difficult due to reduced vision created by the traffic, especially when turning right into the northbound traffic.”

“The yellow box junction aiding exit from Plains Avenue benefits those wishing to head towards Loose and the Sutton Road but we feel still leaves those heading towards town in a very vulnerable position. Without lights controlling this junction, as the lights at Cranborne Avenue do currently, it will only be possible for traffic to pull out from Plains Avenue when the volume of traffic heading towards town on the A229 allows, as it is not legal to wait in the yellow box for someone to let you in. This seems to us to increase the risk of an accident and may encourage people to wait in the yellow box. With the new houses being built along the Sutton Road the situation will presumably only get worse and will be exacerbated by the proposed change in the traffic light sequence at the Wheatsheaf Junction.”

“This is the only traffic lighted right turn onto the main road into town from the massive Shepway estate. Plains Avenue is scary to turn right for nervous drivers and park way doesn't allow for right turns.”

“Closure of Cranborne Avenue for cars existing onto the A229 concerns me as I used to regularly use this junction especially to turn right onto the A229 during busy times because of the safety the traffic lights provided as turning left or right out of Plains Avenue onto the A229 during rush hour proved too much of a problem and felt unsafe. Following the introduction of a yellow box junction on the A229 exiting and entering Plains Avenue has improved, but during busy times exiting Plains Avenue and turning left onto the A229 can be a slow process. Judging the timing and waiting until traffic is clear on the inside lane and the traffic is starting to move on the outside lane, then relying on the goodwill of drivers before attempting to join the traffic.”

“The most obvious alternative route for us would be to turn right on to the A229 from Plains Avenue. However, this is a somewhat dangerous manoeuvre, as it requires crossing four lanes of invariably busy traffic. If the closure goes ahead the number of vehicles choosing this route will inevitably increase to such an extent that the A229 traffic flow will be impeded. Furthermore, there are likely to be frequent accidents because of frustrated drivers mistiming their exit from Plains Avenue.”

“Now I am focused to use the Plains Avenue junction with Loose Road and the only way you can exit is by pulling and stopping halfway across to turn right in the yellow box forcing oncoming traffic to stop causing more traffic jams and dangerous driving. Not to mention higher stress levels.”

“I live in Loose Road between Plains Avenue and Cranborne Avenue. We have to use Cranborne Avenue to safely enter and exit our home. This closure means at busy times we will have to directly cut across 4 lanes of fast flowing or sometimes static traffic which will slow down the intended flow. This is an extremely dangerous manoeuvre and is an accident waiting to happen!”

“I live in Ringwood Road so our nearest entrance to the main road has been blocked. That junction was understood and used properly by thousands of people! We have to now take a

chance of getting out via Plains Avenue or use the back roads and go to town via Mote Park. Those roads will get much busier.”

“This closure is ludicrous, you now have to try and use Northumberland Road by NatWest to try and turn right onto Sutton Road or even worse use Plains Avenue which means crossing four lanes of heavy traffic or stationary traffic at peak times. Drivers are taking unnecessary risks to get out onto Sutton Road as we can no longer use the traffic lights at Cranborne Avenue to safely turn right onto Sutton Road.”

“I have seen many near misses from the extended traffic using plains avenue to turn right onto the Loose road. They have to travel across 4 lanes of live traffic with no roundabout or traffic lights. Prior to Cranborne being closed there wasn't nearly anywhere the amount of cars using Plains Avenue to turn right as there are now. There is nowhere else along that end of the Loose Road where you can turn right. Are you going to change other roads so they can turn right?”

Cranborne Avenue closure has / will increase the journey times of local residents / residents in the immediate area (including Marion's Crescent, Ringwood Road, Cranborne Avenue) (concern noted by 16 of the 97 providing a comment)

“We can't turn left or right out of Plains Avenue due to congestion. We can't turn right out of Northumberland Road as it's a safety black spot. The only other option is wait the 30 or so min like we did this morning at Park Way but this doesn't help if we need to turn right and the congestion here was bad before this dreadful idea. I wonder how many people will have the inconvenience of having or being delayed due to the accidents this will cause. More thought should have been given to the other exists (traffic lights or roundabouts at these junctions) before removing the only junction that works.”

“The traffic at girls' schools will increase out past Park way and Willow way and cause more problems for children going to Park way school. Basically the closure will shift the problem to somewhere else and add an increased mileage and journey time for those living around Cranborne Avenue.”

“As a resident of Marion crescent, myself and my partner are now having to detour through Shepway estate adding time to our journeys and costs in petrol. Roads are now being blocked in other areas as traffic is diverted trying to find another way to get access onto the loose road and many more that Cranborne Avenue would have taken us directly to.”

“While the change might make it a tiny bit quicker for north south through traffic until it gets to the gridlock around Archbishop's Palace. However, the effect on local residents around the Wheatsheaf will be disastrous and minor roads will become rat runs in the rush hour leading to more conflict between cars and pedestrians at busy times. The real solution would be to divert north south through traffic away from the centre of Maidstone by improving the roads to the east and west of Maidstone.”

Cranborne Avenue closure has / will have implications for traffic trying to turn into Plains Avenue from town centre / turning left out of Plains Avenue to connecting roads (concern noted by 11 of the 97 providing a comment)

“Driving from town up the Sutton road. Now the lights don’t stop for Cranborne Avenue there is a more steady stream of traffic going up the Sutton road. The lights used to give a small gap in which broke up the stream helping traffic coming out of Northumberland Road. The junction at Morrisons and Wallis Avenue have been majorly impacted since the closure of Cranborne because there is no break in the traffic and the increase in traffic now detouring. The Wallis Avenue to Sutton road and Sutton road to Willington street are constantly snarled up. It only used to be at rush hour times that these junctions would be difficult to get out of, now it’s pretty much all day.”

“The traffic is diverting down Marion Crescent to Plains Avenue turning right to go into town is causing more traffic where the cars are trying to get into the left lane blocking the right lane for the cars turning right into park way. Park way is already a busy road at school times with cars parked on both sides of the road. For those turning to go to Loose from Plains Avenue this is a lot easier for them.”

“To get to my Doctor’s surgery is not too bad, but I still have to go along Plains Avenue so that I can then turn left onto the main road. Quite often there are vehicles there waiting to turn right and go towards the town and due to the volume of traffic on the main road this can take some time to achieve, and if there are more than 3 vehicles waiting to carry out this manoeuvre, those wishing to turn left just to sit there and wait!! Shortly after the closure came into effect I had to go to Staplehurst. Going there was not too bad using the Plains Avenue route, coming back however is a different matter, I could either carry on towards town and turn right into Plains Avenue across two lanes when it was safe and clear to do so. The danger using this route is the traffic coming behind using the right hand Lane to get to South Park Road, as not keeping an eye on what’s going on ahead of them. On the occasion I went to Staplehurst I chose to turn right at the traffic lights at the Wheatsheaf and go up the Sutton Road the along Northumberland Avenue and through Shepway using more petrol and an increased mileage and time. But was for me a much SAFER option.”

Safety concerns for children / elderly / residents of neighbouring roads due to increased congestion / speeding traffic / local roads used as ‘rat runs’ (including Plains Avenue, Ringwood Road) (noted by 12 of the 97 providing a comment)

“Inevitably lower Marion Crescent will see an increase in volume of vehicles. This is a popular route for parents and children accessing local schools and may impact on their health and safety.”

“A large number of young children live in the area and there is a significant danger these roads will become a rat run and that children will be involved in traffic accidents.”

“I live along Marion Crescent, for me to walk around my area with my young child, is now far more riskier than when we first moved here. I don’t feel that I should have to waste the more expensive diesel I have in my car to make what was a simple journey anywhere now longer, more dangerous and more troublesome. A total disregard of those who actually live in this area.”

“Plains Avenue was already a busy road, used by Park way school parents, residents on South Park road to park extra vehicles and traffic from Loose Road through to the roundabout at the end of Plains Avenue and vice versa. The closure has increased speeding, noise and safety matters.

Day, night even the very early hours of the morning vehicles, even heavy duty vehicles charge down Plains Avenue. We have witnessed increased vehicle collisions, vehicles colliding into trees, residents parked vehicles being collided into and near misses to children and elderly neighbours both on pavements and those riding bikes to school. Even driving out of one's driveway is risky with the share number of cars speeding up and down the road. Safety is now a critical matter on this road."

"How else will residents and others be able to access Cranborne Avenue from the Sutton Road and Loose Road, other than having to drive through the housing estate roads which are already congested and dangerous with parked vehicles and children walking to and from school?"

"This will cause danger to residents in the local vicinity. Closing Cranborne Avenue will only push increased traffic to Plains Avenue. This will increase an already dangerous junction. No safety measures have been put in for this junction. I have witnessed increased traffic and speeding vehicles in Marion Crescent since the trial, this is a danger to children. This trial has not made traffic towards town any better."

Concerns regarding pollution as a result of increased congestion and longer journey times (noted by 17 of the 97 providing a comment)

"Increased traffic congestion in Marion Crescent and Plains Avenue resulting in noise and fume pollution. A large number of young children live in the area and there is a significant danger these roads will become a rat run and that children will be involved in traffic accidents. There are no lights at the Plains Avenue junction with Loose Road and there is a very high likelihood this will become an accident blackspot as cars try to navigate the 4 lanes upon leaving and entering this junction. The only alternative is a significant detour along Plains Avenue to join Loose Road via either Northumberland Road or Park Way (where there is no right turn). Again this will increase pollution and the chance of accidents as people become caught in congestion on these quiet and narrow residential roads."

"Additional time will be spent on residential roads, either driving or sitting stationary in queues increasing pollution and its impact on the health of local residents."

"The diversion route from Plains Avenue to Marion crescent passes many more houses increasing pollution from more people."

"The level of congestion on the Loose Road since this road has closed has increased significantly. When accidents happen it causes tailbacks all the way to Coxheath. This is detrimental to the health of our children as cars sit with engines idling pumping out fumes."

Concerns about access / speed of access for emergency service vehicles (noted by 4 of the 97 providing a comment)

"How will emergency vehicles access the estate? If I remember correctly the reason there are no traffic calming measures on Cranborne Avenue was to make access easier for those vehicles. It seems that nobody has considered what happens to the traffic currently using Cranborne Avenue to access the Loose Road after the closure."

“Both Kent Fire & Rescue Service and South East Coast Ambulance Service have facilities located in the southern part of Loose Road south of the Wheatsheaf junction (at 388 and 409 Loose Road). Loss of access to Cranborne Avenue at the Wheatsheaf junction will impeded and delay emergency services travelling into Shepway estate and beyond to the north-west.”

