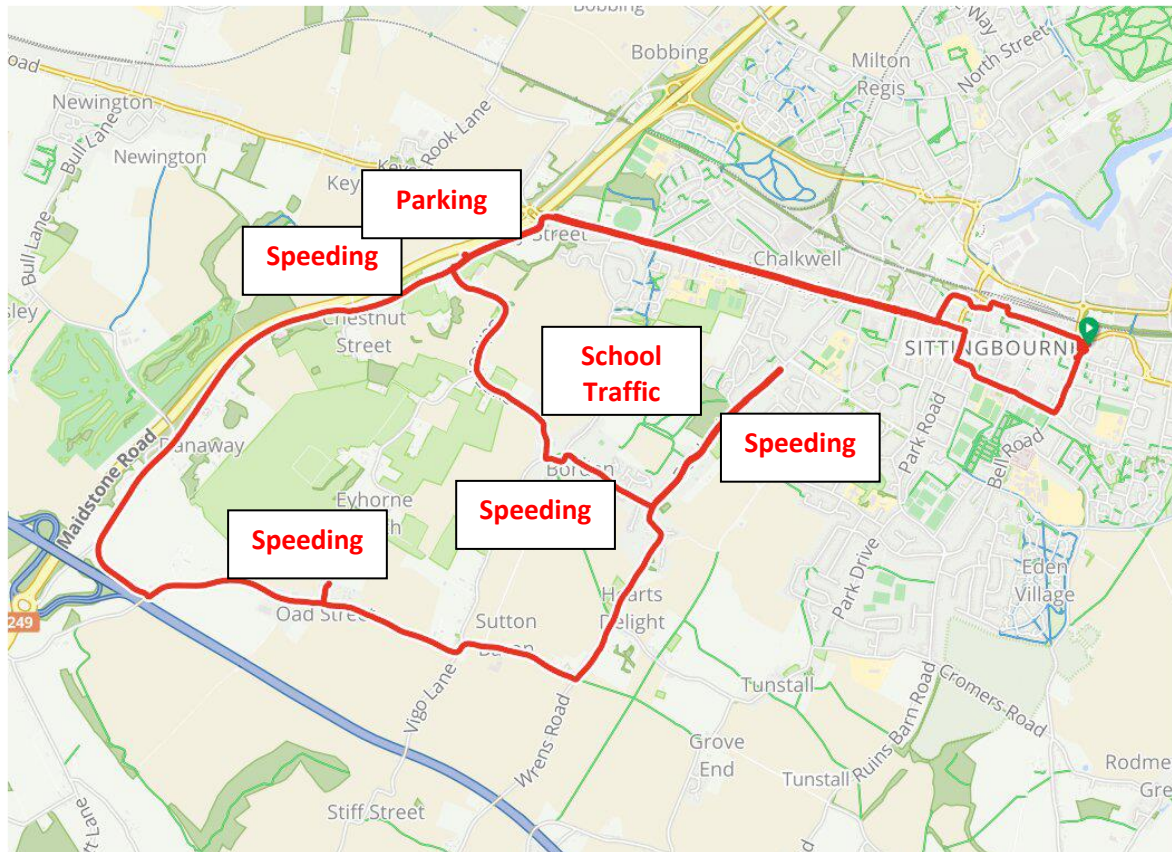


Borden & Grove Park Ward LCWIP Rural Lane Review Briefing Paper

This Briefing Note follows an assessment of the country lanes in the Borden & Grove Park Ward as part of the boroughwide LCWIP Rural work. As part of this work the SYSTRA A249 Grovehurst Junction Improvement Scheme Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding Assessment Report was also reviewed. This work included a ride with the chair of Borden Parish Council to gain a better understanding of the traffic problems being faced by residents and businesses. The route taken of this ride is highlighted in red below.



Background

This Ward, like others across Swale, has suffered from a significant volume of inappropriate traffic using the rural lanes, at speed, to enable drivers to avoid perceived delays on the A2 and A249. This has been exacerbated by National Highways' ongoing work on Junction 5 of the M2. This has meant that rural settlements such as Oad Street, Chestnut Street, Danaway and Borden have been blighted by traffic.

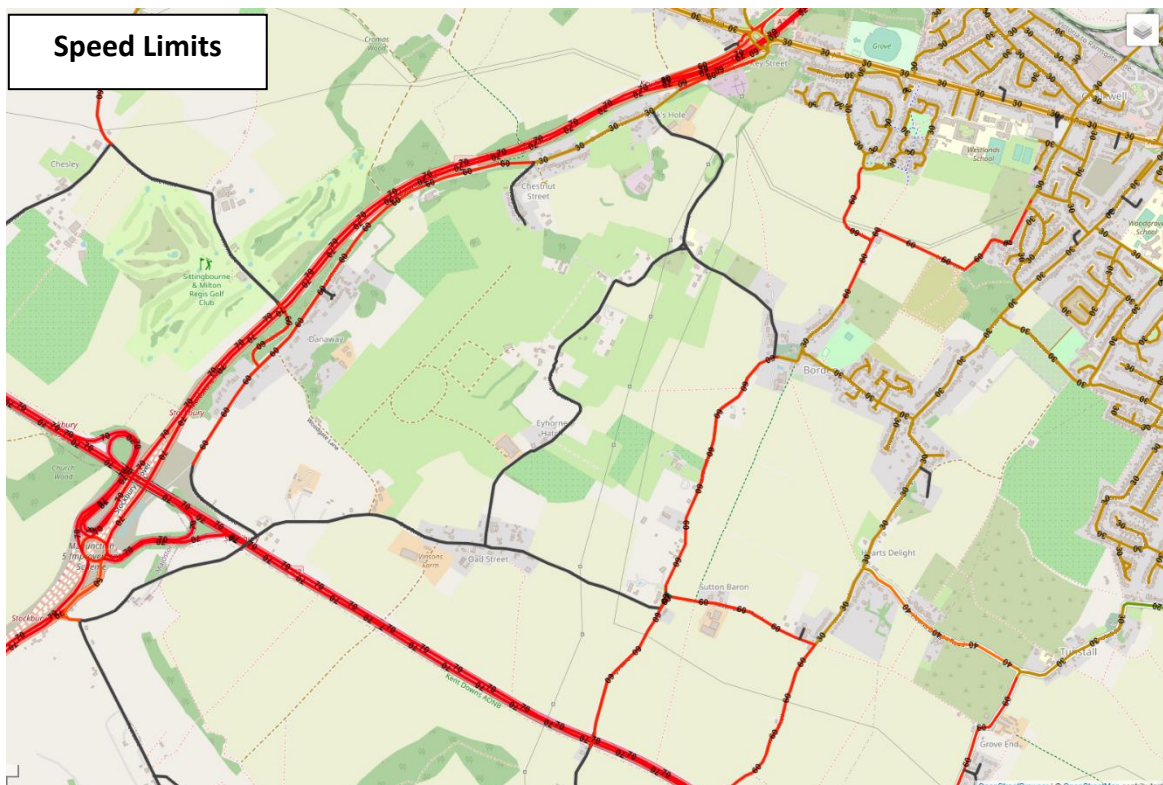
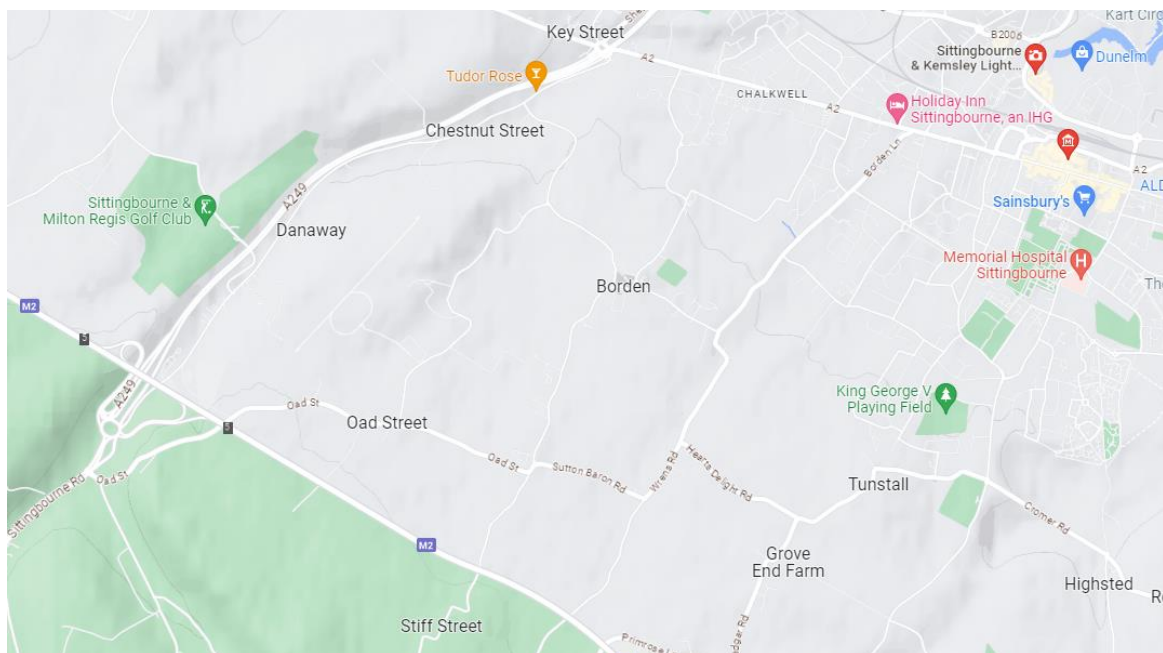
Consequences

Large volumes of speeding traffic on rural lanes across Borden has multiple impacts:

- Danger - Unlike roads designed for significant traffic volumes at speed, these rural lanes do not generally have footways and when they do, they are rarely continuous.
- Harming and reducing vulnerable road users – These rural lanes are utilised by a wider range of users, walkers, mobility aid users, cyclists and equestrians. All of whom are now prioritised above motorists in the Highway Code. A fact that is currently not yet reflected in Highways spending, design or usage.
- Speeding – Most of the rural lanes in Borden are “unrestricted”, giving drivers a green light to drive at whatever speed they feel appropriate – which is often inappropriate.
- Fear – This cannot be under-estimated. Every rural resident who has ever walked, wheeled, cycled or ridden along a country lane has experienced some vehicle incident that has put them in danger or harm. This is wrong. Rural lanes must be shared by all, there is no option, they are not the domain of motorised vehicles. This is why “through” traffic is so inappropriate. Billions have been spent building the strategic network specifically for drivers, make them use it.
- Farm Operations Interference - For farms, and there are several in this area, rural lanes are operational environments, faster higher volumes of traffic impede their work.
- Infrastructure Damage - More damage to rural lanes due to increased weight, width, as well as speed of vehicles leading to increased degradation of road surfaces and undermining road margins and verges.
- Noise - The increased noise, especially at speed, impacts residents’ mental health
- Health & Well-being – Rural traffic creates a car dependent culture amongst rural communities, which further increases the traffic on rural lanes. This increases residents’ inactivity which has long term negative health implications
- Property damage – as many properties are close to rural lanes, often right on the roadside – which was fine when the passing traffic was originally the occasional horse and cart – not a 36 tonne truck or 2.5 tonne SUV.
- Ecological damage – air pollution, noise pollution, run off pollution, as well as physical harm to flora and fauna
- Economic damage – we should be celebrating the glorious countryside of the Borden area, opening it up to nearby urban residents and visitors from further afield. This cannot be fully realised whilst inappropriate traffic dominates the landscape, suppressing the visitor economy.

Current and Future Road Layout

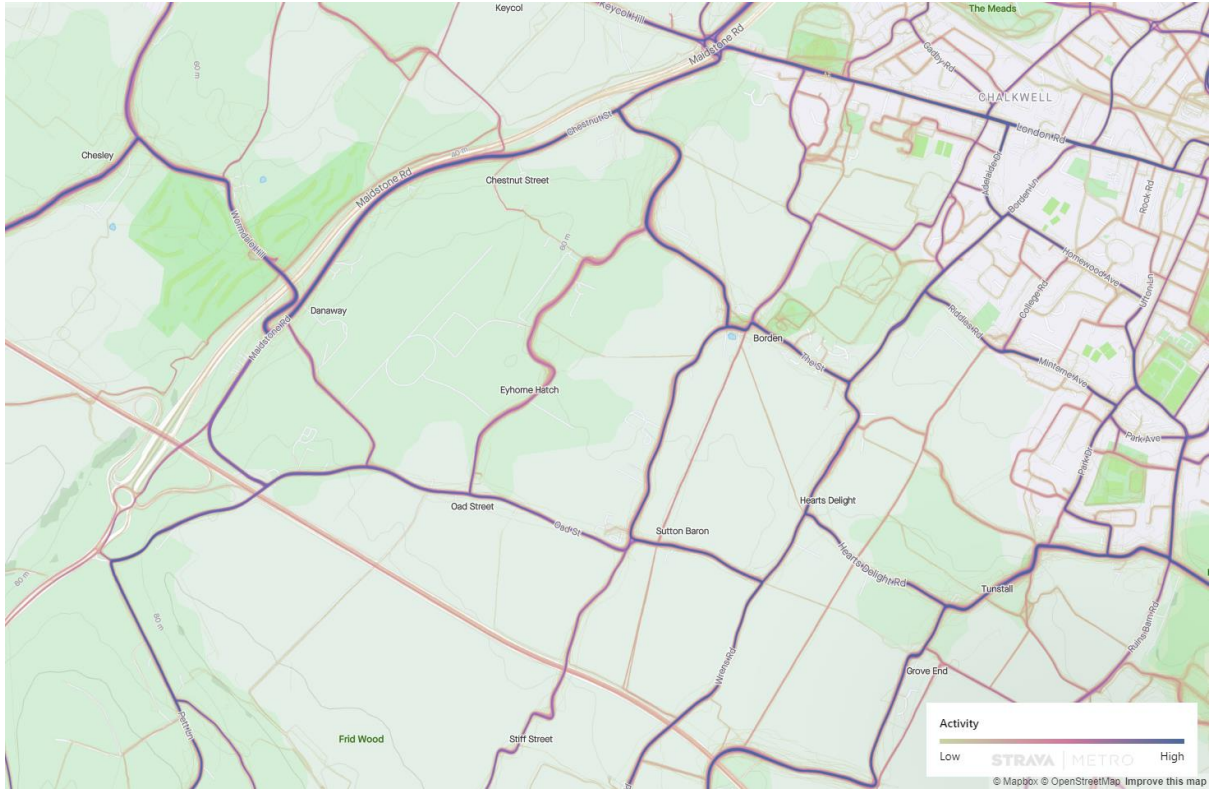
Below is the current road layout across the Ward. Works are being undertaken at Junction 5 of the M2 and are planned at Key Street roundabout and the Wises Lane development includes a new road and a roundabout on Chestnut Street (diagrams below). Despite this large amount of concentrated Highways work, no study has been commissioned on the cumulative impact of these improvements on the rural road network and the residents & businesses. It is obviously hoped that all these junction improvements will make life better for the rural residents. However, because the research has not been undertaken, despite the size of these Highways investments, we simply don't know. On the face of it, without further rural road traffic management, it appears that the strategic highways improvements could potentially make utilising the rural lane network more attractive, further increasing the flow of motorised traffic Northeast & Southwest.



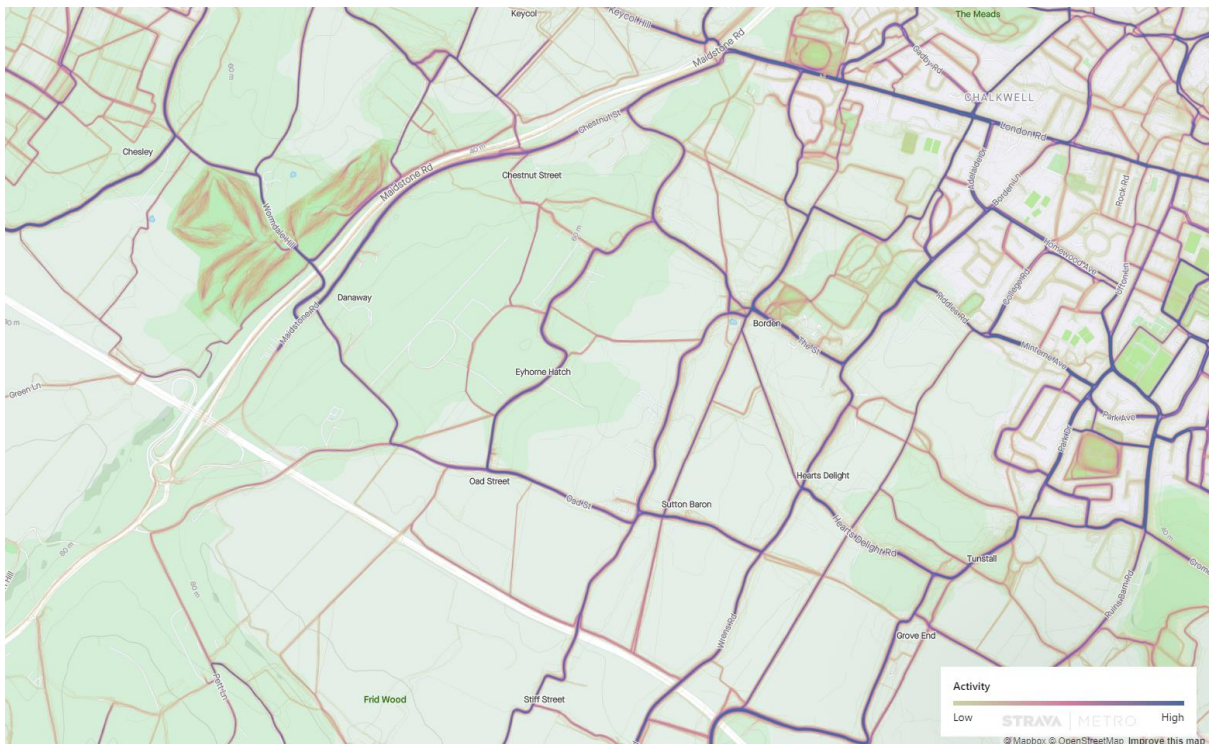
STRAVA METRO Heat Maps

These heat maps, utilising data collected between August 2022 and July 2023, show a high level of cycling, running and walking throughout the Borden area and across Key Street roundabout.

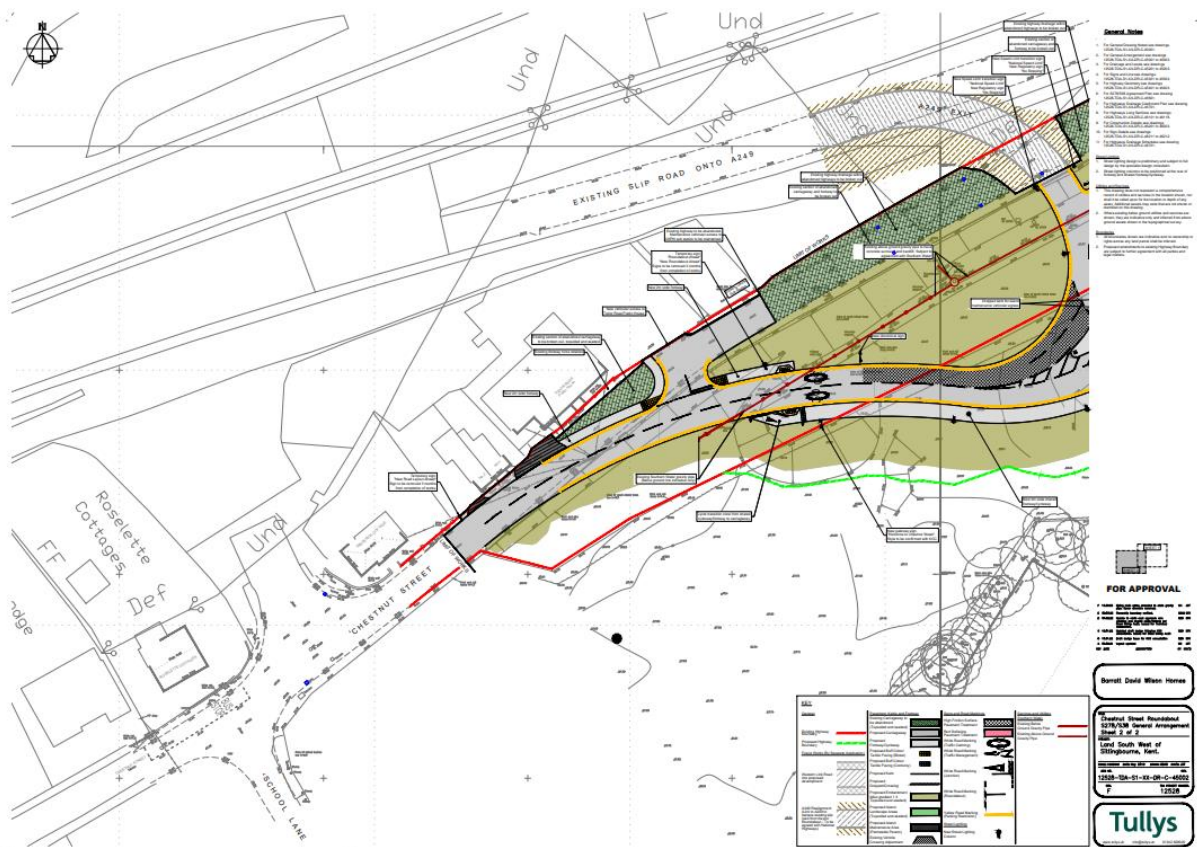
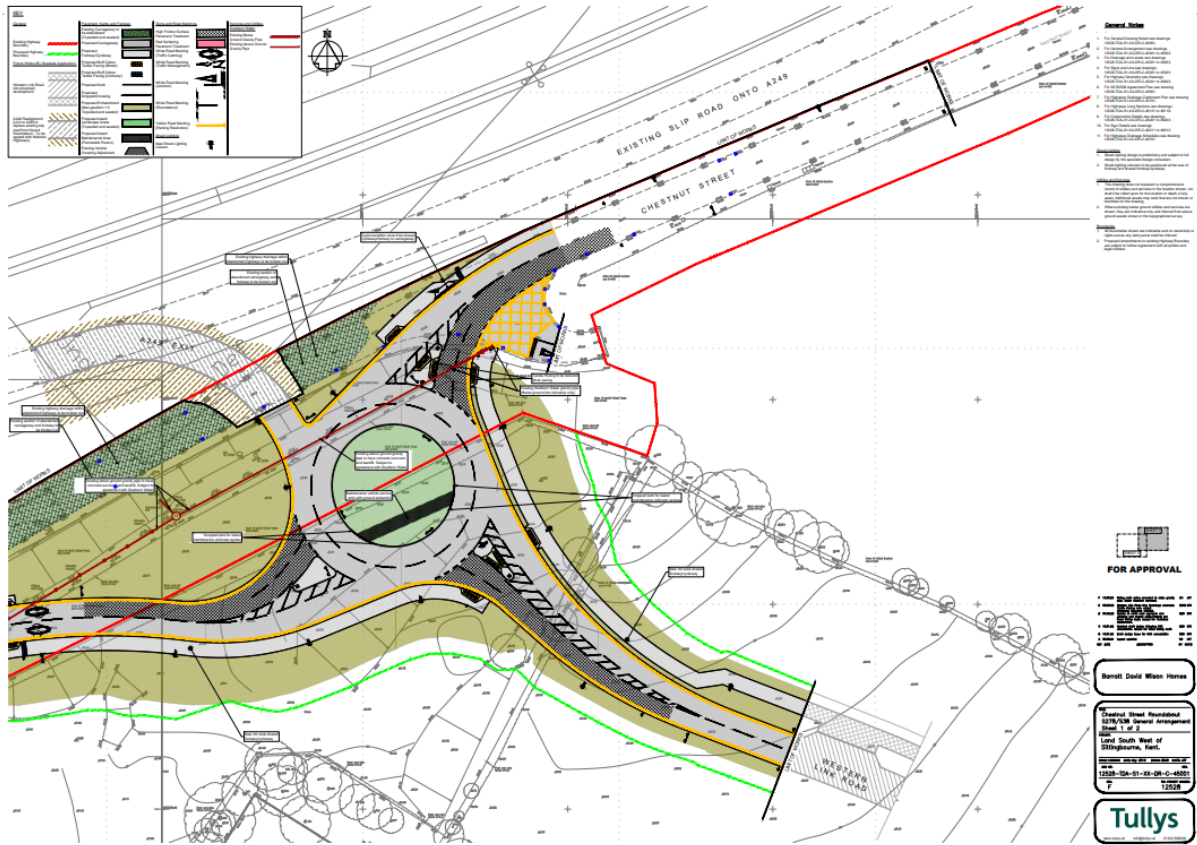
Bicycle and e-bike Riding



Walking & Running

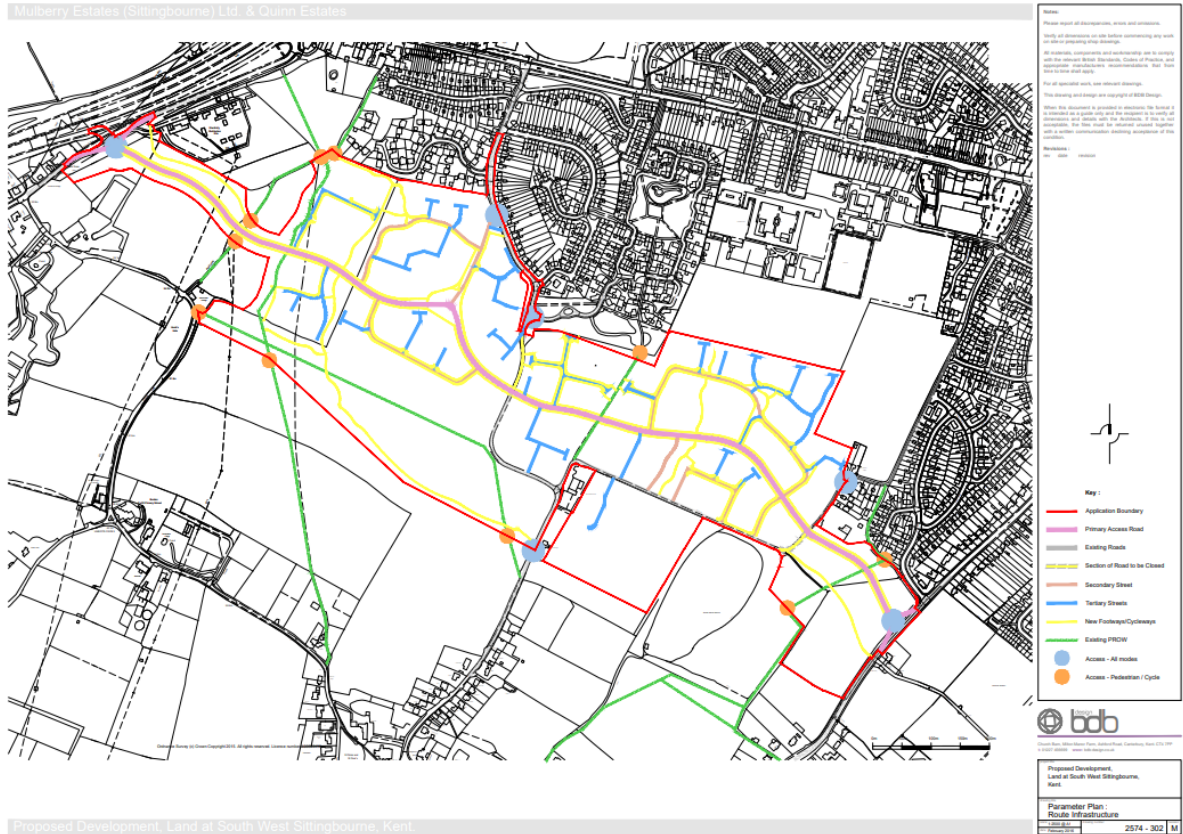


Chestnut Street roundabout plans

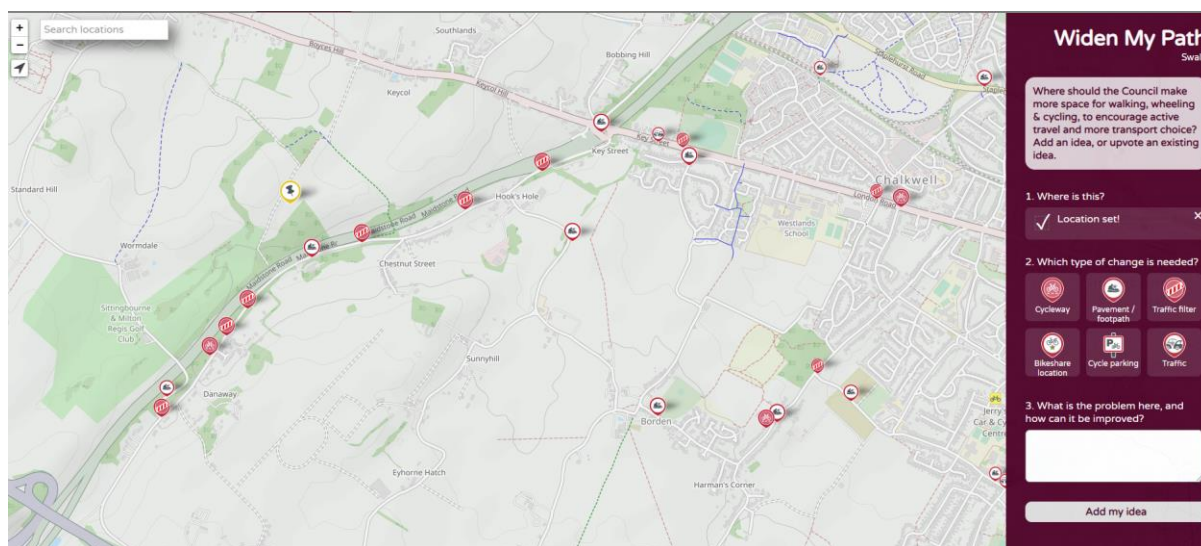


Wises Lane Development

This development will bring a new link road, the new Chestnut Street roundabout and more old-style shared paths as well a significant increase in daily vehicle movements. It cuts across several PROW which should mean some improvements to the network. Below is a map of the originally planned route infrastructure.



Widen My Path/Swale



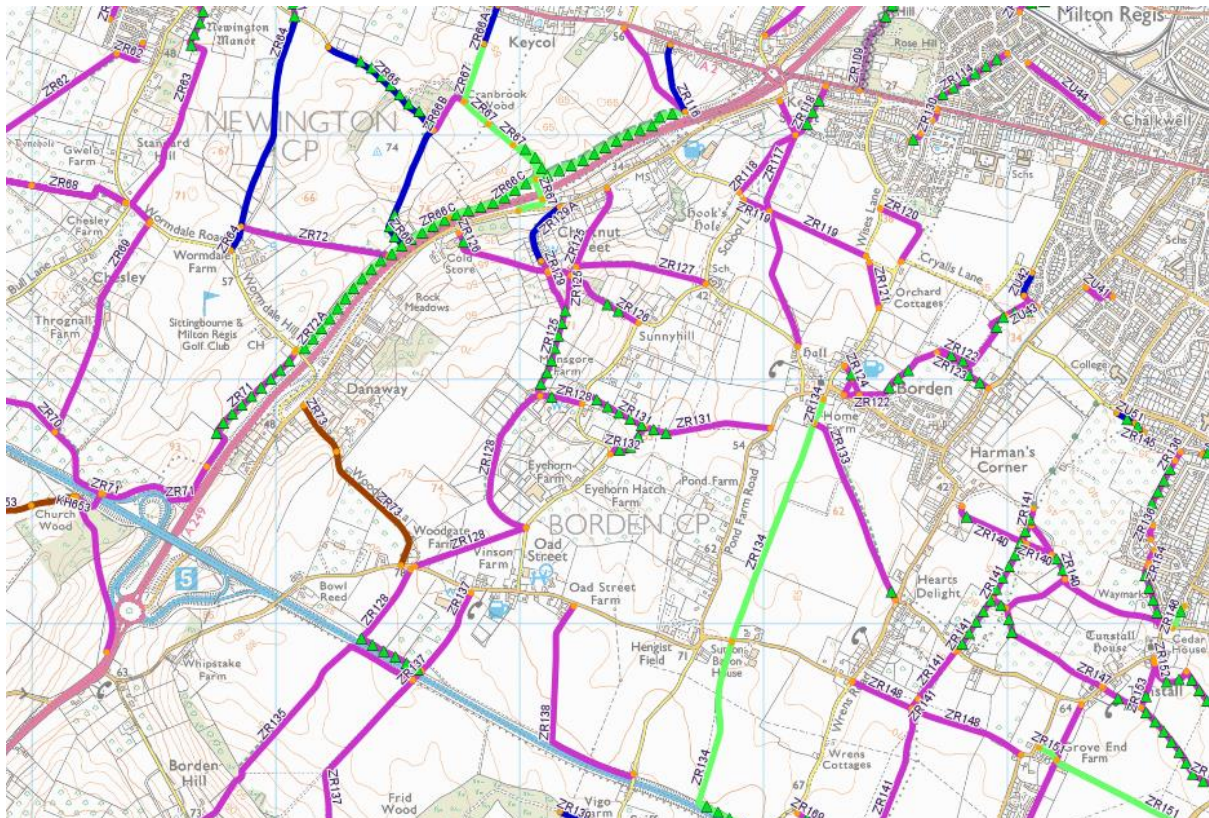
Since summer 2022 we have been collecting comments on www.widenmypath.com/swale on where residents think the Council should make more space for walking, wheeling & cycling, to encourage active travel and more transport choice. Below are the comments specifically relating to the Borden area.

Comment	Category	Likes
Speed of traffic through narrower part of Borden Lane in the village needs reducing. Speeds frequently exceed 30 mph.	Closure	0
Wide road with space for cyclepath. Rat run with ignored 30 mph limit. Main route to station and town centre.	cycleways	7
Narrow pavements on upper end of Borden Lane, fast moving traffic a danger	track	8
Traffic calming needed. Can't slow down to pull onto my driveway (southbound) without people overtaking me heading towards the junction of Wormdale/Maidstone at speed.	closure	7
Crossing needed to allow safe access to park and the Maypole.	track	7
Nowhere for pedestrians to shelter safely from passing traffic. This route is used by many including the elderly, parents with prams/buggies and school children daily. There is no pavement.	track	2
Foliage needs cutting back, footpath is becoming very narrow.	track	4
Poor visibility when accessing Borden Lane from Riddles owing to parked cars	closure	1
Road usually has a 50-mph speed limit which is too high. Current 30 mph widely ignored. Site of several accidents. Main cycle route to get to Maidstone or Newington to avoid main A249.	cycleways	9
Speeding and rat running which makes it very dangerous. Our car was hit parked on Maidstone Road by a speeding driver.	closure	9
This is a rat run and leads to a primary school. Speeds are too high, traffic volume too high. Pavements disappear and pedestrians need to cross the road several times to access the school.	closure	8
No pavement! Near primary school	track	9

Public Rights of Way Network

The Borden area is quite well served by the PROW network. Better utilisation of the paths could be encouraged through improvements making them less for the enthusiast and more accessible for everyday use. There are potentially some useful everyday trip routes such as:

- Hearts Delight-Borden (ZR133/ZR134) – 15-minute walk
- Chestnut Street-Borden Primary School (ZR125/ZR127) – 10-minute walk
- Danaway-Oad Street (ZR73) – 15-20 minute walk
- Borden-Westlands School (ZR122/ZU43/ZU42) – 25-minute walk



Questions that need answers

1. What traffic management is being put in place to deter traffic from using Chestnut Street and the Maidstone Road? Weight limits? Access Only? Speed Limits?
2. Why is the proposed cycling provision on the new Western Link Road shared use and only on one side?
3. Why are cycle tracks/footways not continuous at junctions, giving priority to vulnerable road users?
4. The pedestrian and cycling impact assessments in the Systra A249 Key Street Junction report dated 24/05/2022 erroneously assessed the demand for routes as “Low”, with one “Moderate”. Consequently, a higher level of intervention to tackle the severance impact of the revised junction needs to be proposed.
5. Likewise, the current level of walking, running and cycling along Chestnut Street – the proposed A249 slip road and access route to the Wisers Lane development, requires a greater level of active travel interventions. It is certainly not acceptable to direct cyclists from a shared path onto Chestnut Street north of the new roundabout.
6. How is traffic going to be managed to deter it from utilising J5-L3 to and from Sittingbourne through inappropriate rural lanes?
7. Is the Western Link road on the Wisers Lane development expected to divert traffic away from Borden and Oad Street and become the main route connecting south Sittingbourne to the A249?
8. If so, what additional work is being planned for Borden Lane (i.e. segregated cycle tracks)?
9. What plans are in place to improve traffic flows and therefore drivers’ perceptions, on the A2? Parking restrictions? System traffic light management? Junction improvements /reductions? Traffic reduction measures?
10. Has a study been commissioned to look at the cumulative impact of these Highways improvements on the wider road network? Is there an understanding of the impact on traffic flows beyond the A249 and the M2?
11. What analysis has been undertaken to understand the level of risk to future Highways funding for providing inadequate active travel facilities with highways improvements?
12. What mitigating traffic management is being implemented during the works to maintain traffic flow on the A2 and dissuade drivers from using inappropriate rural lanes?
13. What discussions are planned with large employers, logistics companies, Medway Council and other organisations, including schools, to reduce the impact of congestion during the works?