

Kent Road Survey Summary

August 2023



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City Council

Kent Road, Cornwall Road to Cumberland Road, Pascoe Vale, was part of a trial of separated bike lanes in 2021 and 2022. At the August 2022 Council meeting, Council resolved to make changes to the trial infrastructure to address concerns raised by residents, Pascoe Vale Health, Cole Reserve sporting clubs and road users and in doing so, extend the trial period. The resulting design changes were installed in December 2022 and feedback was sought from these parties via multi-channel surveys spanning February to May 2023. This fact sheet provides a high-level overview of the key feedback obtained through the surveys.

Multi-channel survey

Surveys were undertaken using three different communication channels – physical mailout¹, on-site intercept² and online³. As committed at the August 2022 Council meeting, the results have been analysed and reported separately for each of the three channels.

A total of 1083 surveys was completed, with 82 physical mailout surveys returned, 123 on-site intercepts conducted and 878 people completing the survey online. The surveys contained questions to help determine whether the updated design addressed the concerns raised with the initial design, as well as understanding respondent connections to Kent Road and basic demographic information.

Did the design changes address the key concerns raised during the initial 12 months?

From the initial trial to the revised trial, the separation kerbing (islands) between the bike lane and parking lane was altered to a narrower kerb and occasional blocks rather than continuous kerbing. The surveys asked: “Has the reduced size of the islands improved your ability to get in and out of your car on Kent Road?” The table below shows the distribution of responses across the three answers provided.

Survey channel	Responses			
	Yes	No	Unsure	TOTAL
Physical mailout	6	64	2	72
On-site intercept	14	74	19	107
Online	70	608	186	864
TOTAL	90	746	207	1043

Some 72 per cent of all respondents indicated that the changes to the separation islands did not help people to get into and out of their car, and this ranged from 69 per cent for on-site intercept respondents to 89 per cent for physical mailout respondents.

¹ Physical mailout surveys were sent on 9 April 2023 to 825 properties in the area bounded by Boundary Rd, Cornwall Rd, Cole Reserve southern boundary, Warwick Rd and Landells Rd.

² Onsite intercept surveys were conducted by Council officers on: Sat 18 February 2023 1-4pm (cricket home game); Tue 4 April 2023 10am-12:30pm; Wed 19 April 2023 2-3:30pm (poor weather); Sat 29 April 2023 2-4:30pm (football home game).

³ An online survey was conducted from 4 April to 7 May 2023, promoted to those registered for trial updates, those receiving the mailout survey as well as via static and variable signs placed along Kent Rd.

Have the shorter islands made it easier to put your bins out for collection?

The changes to the separation islands was also intended to improve the space available for residents to put out their bins. For residents of Kent Road only, the surveys asked: "Have the shorter islands made it easier to put your bins out for collection?" The table below shows the distribution of responses across the three answers provided.

Survey channel	Responses			
	Yes	No	Unsure	TOTAL
Physical mailout	2	6	0	8
On-site intercept	4	17	7	28
Online	4	18	8	30
TOTAL	10	41	15	66

Some 62 per cent of Kent Road respondents indicated that the changes to the separation islands did not help residents put their bin out, and this ranged from 60 per cent for online respondents to 75 per cent for physical mailout respondents. While 23 per cent were unclear about whether the change had helped, only 15 per cent thought it had helped with putting their bin out.

Do you feel safe riding on the updated Kent Road bike lanes?

Respondents who indicated that they rode a bike to Kent Road were asked whether they feel safe riding on the updated Kent Road bike lanes. The implication of the question was that it was asked in comparison to the earlier trial arrangement. Respondents were not asked to provide a relative response regarding how they felt riding on Kent Road in this section prior to any bike lanes being implemented. The responses across the different channels are shown in the table below. The results are also segregated by gender (using those indicating that they were male as one category, and combining the responses for female, prefer not to say and self-described) on the basis that males are typically more confident than others riding in less protected bike facilities⁴.

Channel	Gender	Responses				
		Yes	No	TOTAL	Yes	No
Physical mailout	Identify as male	5	4	9	56%	44%
	All other respondents	2	1	3	67%	33%
On-site intercept	Identify as male	7	9	16	44%	56%
	All other respondents	5	7	12	42%	58%
Online	Identify as male	119	60	179	66%	34%
	All other respondents	42	47	89	47%	53%
All channels	Identify as male	131	73	204	64%	36%
	All other respondents	49	55	104	47%	53%
TOTAL		180	128	308	58%	42%

With small numbers of physical mailout and on-site intercept users being bike riders, the most meaningful analysis of these results is the combination of all channels. Of those who identified as male, (two-thirds of the bike riding respondents), 64 per cent felt safe riding on the updated Kent Road bike lanes. Of all non-male respondents (those identifying as female, self-described or who preferred not to say), a significantly lower 47 per cent felt safe riding on the updated Kent Road bike lanes.

⁴ Pearson et al, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2021.101290> - this study showed that 8.6% of males and only 3.3% of non-males were confident bike riders.

Given non-males are typically less confident riders, this insight suggests that the lane design hasn't completely removed the concerns of less confident riders. However it is not possible to conclude how safe the Kent Road trial protected bikes lanes are compared to riding before any lanes were installed.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

In all survey channels, respondents were given the opportunity to provide further commentary on the bike lane trial. This has been analysed separately for bike riders who said they felt safe riding in the Kent Road bike lanes and those who said they didn't. While those who didn't feel safe in the bike lanes understandably provided further information about their concerns, there were also many bike riding respondents who felt safe riding in the Kent Road lanes who left negative feedback on the treatment.

The free text commentary is a rich source of insight into the specific issues that respondents had observed with the bike lane trial, and included specific feedback from bike riders that:

- The lanes themselves were difficult to ride in due to ponding of water, accumulation of gravel and bins creating in-lane obstacles.
- Vehicles using the bike lanes where they pass across the top of an intersection as a passing bay (when allowing traffic from the other direction through) posed a hazard for bike riders in the lanes.
- Bike riders who chose not to use the lanes (or were turning off and needed not to use the lanes) were subject to harassment from people who observed them riding in the centre of the road.
- The separated treatment is quite short and ends at a roundabout that is difficult to navigate and feeds into a busier section of Kent Rd, and therefore not a suitably protected route to access the Upfield Path for less confident bike riders.

There was also positive feedback from cyclists about feeling safer having a more connected network for bikes in Pascoe Vale and who feel it is encouraging more people to ride in the area.

The commentary from many respondents is emphatic in its concern about the single lane operation of the two-way road, when there is parking present on both sides, with many considering this to be an unacceptable arrangement given the types of users of Kent Road. These concerns included:

- The difficulty finding somewhere to stop to let cars through and localised congestion this causes
- Difficulty turning out of side streets and driveways where parked vehicles reduce sight lines
- Challenges for pedestrians crossing, in particular to the Pascoe Vale Health medical centre and the remaining risk of separation kerbing as a trip hazard for pedestrians crossing the road

Key stakeholder consultation feedback

Pascoe Vale Health – medical centre

The medical centre was consulted on 4 May 2023 and provided the following feedback, which is largely consistent with the free text comments from the surveys. They stated that:

- Their biggest concern is the two-way traffic negotiating the single lane between parked cars
- Poor driver behaviour was evident such as aggressively refusing to yield to oncoming vehicles, arguments between drivers travelling in opposite directions and reports of sideswiped mirrors / vehicle damage.
- The patients of the health clinic are likely to be the ones either trying to reverse parallel park or otherwise trying to exit vehicles into the single traffic lane.
- Many patients are vulnerable and slow to react to the traffic, particularly when exiting from the driver's side.

Medical centre representatives were critical of Council's engagement approach, stating that they felt that the consultation has only been carried out to articulate and respond to objections, rather than genuinely consider whether the bike lanes should stay.

Pascoe Vale Health's preference is for Council to re-route the bike path away from Kent Road.

Feedback from Coburg Districts Football Club

The Coburg Districts Football Club was consulted on 1 June 2023 and provided the following feedback, which is also consistent with the free text comments from the surveys. They stated that:

- Their main objection has been the reduction of Kent Rd to a single lane, with limited opportunities to pass (impacting players, spectators and visiting teams).
- Parking is heavily utilised on game days, so they are not supportive of any loss of parking in the vicinity of the oval
- They observed congestion in Kent Rd and related acts of aggressive driving from impatient or frustrated drivers.
- They were concerned about the elderly people needing to cross Kent Rd, particularly when accessing the Pascoe Vale Health medical centre (which is open on Saturdays) on busy game days.
- They were not aware of their club members taking advantage of the bike lanes to attend games or training
- They liked the new speed humps at the Cumberland Rd / Kent Rd roundabout and in the area around Cole Reserve
- They did not see any improvement from the reduction of the size of the separated bike lane islands