

Parishes to Town: Active Travel Project Stage 1 report

Introduction & summary

During March 2022, I rode the lanes around Faversham and held meetings with Parish and District Councillors and local residents from: Graveney, Boughton, Dunkirk, Selling, Sheldwich, Painters Forstal (Ospringe), Newnham, Doddington, Eastling, Lynsted, Teynham & Oare. Multiple specific concerns for each place were summed up by one Parish Councillor:

“Too many, too large vehicles travelling too fast, make local residents fear using the lanes for cycling, walking or horse-riding.”

Some residents had the sense that KCC Highways doesn't recognise villages as communities but, rather, as inconveniences in the way of driving between two other places. *“We have to ensure that people can drive along this road, in case the A2 is blocked”.*

With the exception of the A251 at Sheldwich – and as an experienced and confident cyclist – I didn't find the lanes dangerous. However:

- They could be intimidating for (e.g.) inexperienced cyclists, for the young and the elderly.
- There is a definite perception of danger, together with anecdotes about actual collisions / near misses.
- Without reducing the number and speed of vehicles, we are unlikely to see an increase in cycling or walking
- Achieving more cycling and walking will require roads and lanes to be calmed – fewer, slower vehicles.
- Their attractiveness is being eroded by the volume of large vehicles - not just road surfaces, but informal passing places being created

Suggestions about turning (some) lanes into 'access only' met with resistance, but there seemed to be widespread support for lower speed limit throughout the rural areas, including 20mph in village centres.

Recommendations

These can be categorised under three headings:

- 1) Identifying places with greatest potential for active travel; and
- 2) Suggesting possible actions for Parish Councils
- 3) Leveraging / integrating with other projects

1) Places with the greatest immediate potential for active travel are likely fulfil some or all of the following criteria:

- sited on a potential cycling network with Canterbury, Sittingbourne and Whitstable;
- larger population;
- close proximity to Faversham;
- routes are deliverable in the short to medium term, if funding were available;
- support from the Parish Council and residents.

Boughton and Teynham satisfy the first four criteria. Support from the Parish Council needs to be confirmed.

Boughton: lies on the strategic route between Faversham (3.5 miles) and Canterbury (5.5 miles) and, with Dunkirk, has a significant population of 3,500. There are obvious routes in both directions, which require some, but hugely complex interventions, together with a possible route to Selling station.

Teynham: With a population of 3,000, Teynham is on the strategic, largely flat route between Faversham (5 miles) and Sittingbourne (4 miles). With traffic calming, Lower Road provides a suitable route into Faversham. It is not currently on NCN1, but could be, with minor re-alignment of the route. A route from Teynham could be accessed by people from Lynsted.

In addition, Sheldwich could also deliver modal shift, since it is even closer to Faversham, significant numbers of primary school children travel there from Faversham and the Parish Council has demonstrated the desire to develop an active travel plan:

Graveney, Painters Forstal and Oare are close enough for people to walk or cycle into Faversham and existing roads or public rights of way could be improved to facilitate these. Newnham, Eastling and Doddington are too far from Faversham to facilitate walking. Cycling is more possible, particularly with the advent of e-bikes, although the topography and the current road layouts militate against it.

2) Parishes to consider

- HIPs to include Active Travel plans. Consider role of utility cycling and/or walking, especially with the implications of e-bikes for more remote villages. Note also needs for walking / cycling / horse-riding as leisure.
- Promoting the use of e-bikes.
- Reviewing “Don’t Lose your way” map. <https://gis-dlyw-ramblers.astuntechnology.com/map/>. While the deadline for submitting lost ways has been removed, the elapse of time might make it harder to re-instate lost rights of way in future. Particularly relevant where development might occur. More likely to be beneficial for leisure / walking than utility cycling, but there may be overlaps.
- Joining together to promote 20mph, saving TRO / consultation and, possibly, design, costs.
- Promoting quiet lanes, making some lanes access only, either physically or with signs, except for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.
- Developing safe routes to schools – interrogate school travel plans and current travel modes, with actions to achieve modal shift. Consider, in particular, Abbey and Queen Elizabeth secondary schools plus primary in Faversham and multiple villages.

2) integration with other projects

- Coast to Downs project. While this is primarily about promoting leisure routes for cycling, walking and riding, certain improvements might be the basis for further developments of routes for commuting or similar. E.g. the route to Perry Wood from Faversham could be used as a basis for connecting Selling to Faversham. Improving a link between Conyer and Doddington could enable residents from Conyer and Lynsted to access the Sittingbourne to Faversham route at Teynham.
- School streets. While KCC is promoting these mainly in towns, there may be opportunities to improve safety around rural schools.

Common themes identified

School run: Graveney - children driven from Seasalter and elsewhere; Luddenham mentioned by Oare and others – unofficial one-way system instigated; Sheldwich (children driven from Faversham (along A251); Boughton and Hernhill; At Selling school, children from other villages were offered places one year when there were few / no local children. In the following year, local children could not get a place, because of sibling preference. A full review of all primary school travel plans, (expected) catchment areas and mode of transport would be beneficial.

SatNavs are a common problem, redirecting people off main roads when there is congestion or when drivers select shortest routes. Action: investigate whether declassifying some lanes and removing them from SatNavs might bring some medium-term benefits.

HGVs. While some clearly need to access properties, others are using lanes inappropriately, possibly following a SatNav. In cycling around the lanes, in separate places, I saw two (foreign registered) HGVs that were clearly lost.

In the smaller, more remote places, cycling and walking for leisure might be as, or more important than utility. In places closer to Faversham, such as Oare, Graveney, Painters Forstal, both walking and cycling into Faversham are possible. For Boughton, Selling, Sheldwich, Teynham and Lynsted, cycling is an option, with the right infrastructure. With the advent of e-bikes, additional places become easily within reach. Action: consider implementing an e-bike trial hire scheme with one or more villages where the challenge to cycling is distance or topography.

Possible next steps

- Obtain school travel plans, to identify catchment areas as evidence base
- Investigate possibility of removing some lanes from the SatNav map.
- Consider role of (and interaction with) leisure cycling and walking
- Consider re-routing (or adding to) NCN1 (Sustrans)
- Work with a village on an e-bike hire scheme
- Work with Sheldwich PC on detailed design for cycle route
- Add more detail on walking opportunities around Faversham

Specifics findings

Graveney: speed (and sometime volumes) of motor vehicles through the village make walking or cycling dangerous. A safe route for walking into Goodnestone is a high priority and a safe walking / cycling into Faversham would also be appreciated. NCN 1 goes through Graveney, but is deemed dangerous along Seasalter Road and then takes a somewhat tortuous route to Faversham. At the very least, traffic calming on Seasalter Road, surface improvements by the Creek and a more direct route near Iron Wharf Boat Yard should be considered. Alternatively, if safe, a routing along the Graveney Road is more direct and faster.

Graveney to Boughton via Dargate, Hernhill and Staplestreet. The lanes felt pretty safe and not busy, but probably not a focus for utility cycling in the short term.

Boughton Pop. 2,000; 3.5 miles to Faversham and 5.5 miles to Canterbury, mostly flat.

I met two local residents, Cllr Alastair Gould and Dr James Perkins, a teacher at Queen Elizabeth school – both keen proponents of active travel. They pointed to the success of the Crab and Winkle route and could see advantages of building something similar to link to Boughton and both Faversham and Canterbury. In the latter case, to link up with the Crab and Winkle, creating a strategic inter-urban network.

Boughton lies on the strategic Faversham and Canterbury route. Numerous possible routes to Faversham.

1. Via Staple Street and Graveney Road. Slightly further, greater elevation, little natural surveillance in many places, narrow and not on desire line for much of Boughton, but does avoid the A2 and Brenley Corner – probably not a priority, unless it can become a quiet lane.
2. Canterbury Road to Brenley Corner, which is currently acceptable in many places. Consider better signing throughout and improvements on the approach to Brenley Corner, particularly the track which runs parallel to Canterbury Road. If and when Brenley Corner is redesigned, safe cycle facilities should be included. A fully segregated and better surfaced bi-directional cycle lane on the south western side of Canterbury would be an improvement, although it currently feels relatively safe.

From Brenley Corner to Faversham, there are a range of alternatives:

- a. Homestall lane (currently too busy and narrow in many places – traffic calming and lower speed limit needed) and:

- i. Graveney Road (busy, wide enough for a bi-directional cycle route, perhaps in place of the existing footpath on the south side of the road), would also serve Goodnestone and Graveney and, in due course, Hernhill, Fostal and Dargate. Would need traffic calming, lower speed limit etc. Is Graveney Road best route for motor vehicles from Faversham to A299.
 - ii. Footpath ZR 496. Direct, but would need conversion to bridleway. Could also serve new development on Love Lane, reduces time on Homestall Lane compared with above alternative
- b. Canterbury Road (west)
- i. North side, making use of existing footpath, would need widening. Any scope for cycle lane INSIDE existing field?
 1. As far as a possible new road into new development and then ZR 496 or Graveney Road
 2. Love Lane and Whitstable Road
 3. Love Lane and Long Bridge: probably rejected as costly, complicated; better alternatives
 - ii. South side – through potential Duchy of Cornwall development

Link to Selling station – 2 miles; 12 mins. A route using existing, mostly flat quiet lanes – Horselees Road and Fox Road – or improved footpaths (ZR625 and ZR 631) from Brickfield Lane via South Street, could be a useful link for those accessing the station.

Link to Canterbury (out of scope of this project). The most direct route is via Harbledown (5.5 miles; 30 mins), but an alternative, quiet route could be developed through Blean Woods. Both routes include Dunkirk Hill, whose steepness is a slight barrier, obviated by e-bikes; the Blean Woods alternative avoids some of the unappealing A2, particularly the challenging service station / Holiday Inn slip road, which currently presents some danger to cyclists. This route is slightly longer, has more elevation, lacks natural surveillance and would need physical intervention.

As an observation, when approached from Faversham, Boughton looks in need of some TLC; Motor vehicles line a street with empty shops and a constant hum from the A2. Approaching from Dunkirk gives a better impression. As the village is in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan, together with Dunkirk, adding a Highways Improvement Plan might prove beneficial.

Dunkirk Population 1,400 – 4.5 miles from Faversham and Canterbury: Cllrs Tutt and Kemp are clearly engaged with their community. They are sceptical about whether active travel can be achieved in any meaningful way. A priority for them is the need for more space for motor vehicles, particularly parking. Councillors were critical of the new signals at Brenley Corner, which they regarded as costly and bring few benefits. Action: check costs and reasons for new signals.

Selling Population 1,000 – 4.5 miles from Faversham: I spoke with Cllr Kris Barker about possible routes from Selling to Faversham. The possible routes identified all have significant barriers, including some topographical challenges and fast, narrow lanes. Potential changes to road layouts if the Duchy of Cornwall development scheme progresses could make the route along Selling Road much more attractive.

Sheldwich Pop 400. Several Parish Councillors were keen to meet. They are fully engaged with their residents and looking to achieve a modal shift towards walking and cycling. A route plan was drawn up as long ago as 2005. They are particularly worried about the safety of children attending the local primary school – many of whom come from Faversham. They would really appreciate a safe cycling route into Faversham, possibly combined with Selling (via Selling Road) or Painters Forstal (via Plumford Lane). Two other alternatives are: 1) using an existing bridleway / track roughly parallel with the A251, or 2) to build a new track behind the hedge on one side or other of the A251.

Walking, cycling and riding for leisure are also important, with Sheldwich sitting at the node of many footpaths and bridleways. Providing a safe route for cycling into Faversham will open up the potential for a safe route all the way to Badlesmere. The Parish is considering drawing up a Highways Improvement Plan. Action: Further work with Parish Council to draw up a HIP and design possible cycle routes into Faversham.

Painters Forstal Pop. 750: Close to Faversham – 2 miles to the station, slightly less to Abbey School. While the most direct route uses Brogdale Road, this is not currently suitable for less confident cyclists and would need traffic-calming. The alternative, via Water Lane is marginally longer and would require using Watling Street to access the Abbey School, but Ospringe Road is a suitable alternative for the town centre and the station. Need to ensure that footpath ZF18 through Perry Court is re-opened. Question whether could be cycle route. Leisure routes to the surrounding countryside are also important, for walking, cycling and horse-riding. Painters Forstal is looking to install new bike stands, to make it a more attractive centre for leisure cyclists.

Eastling: Pop. 350, 5m to Faversham station. Would benefit from enhancements to Painters Forstal. Action Find and follow up with Eastling representative

Met Parish Councillors and local residents from Newnham, Doddington and Lynsted. Similar issues,

Newnham: Pop. 350; 5.5m to Faversham station. (5.5m to Lenham / 400ft of elevation)

Doddington: Pop. 500; 7m to Faversham station (4m to Lenham / 300ft of elevation)

Comments for Newnham, and Doddington. Relatively fast road. Surface not brilliant for cycling. Unlikely to be a key destination for active travel into Faversham, although e-bikes could change. Consider inter-urban route between Faversham and Lenham in the longer term, but outside the scope of this study. Major concerns are speed and volume of traffic, particularly in the peak time and when nearby more major roads are closed or congested.

Lynsted: Pop. 1,150; 6m to Faversham station Similar issues as other villages regarding speed and volume of traffic. Would benefit from safe cycle route from Teynham to Faversham (and, to an extent Sittingbourne, although the direct route is shorter @ 4 miles)

Teynham; Pop. 3,000; 4.5m to Faversham station (and 4m to Sittingbourne). Paul Townson is newly elected to the Parish Council and considers that there is great potential for a route to both Sittingbourne and Faversham, which could be delivered along Lower Road. The main issue that needs solving is the number and speed of vehicles using Lower Road to avoid the A2. Further work would be needed on the entry to Faversham. The current routing of NCN1 avoids the steep section of Bysing Wood Road, taking a 0.5mile detour. Possibilities include: using the steep section, entering via Oare or using bridleway ZR327 to connect to Lower Road. NCN1 also misses Teynham completely.

Oare; Pop. 500; 1.5m to Faversham station. Spoke to Cllr Sonia Jackson, who can see how Oare needs better Active Travel connections into Faversham.

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8th March	Where	Who	Contact details
10am	Village Hall, Graveney	Cllr Claire Boggia Alan Stewart Lisa Stiffell (Clerk) Teresa Bowles	boughtongreys@gmail.com alanstewart20@outlook.com clerkggpc@gmail.com
12pm	Queen's Head Pub, Boughton under Blean	Cllr Jeff Tutt, Dunkirk PC Cllr Kevin Kemp, Dunkirk PC Cllr Paul Ray, Boughton under Blean PC (DNA)	cllrtutt@dunkirkpc.org.uk Cllrkemp@dunkirkpc.org.uk
2pm	4 Granary Cottage, Selling, ME13 9QY	Cllr Kris Barker	kris.barker@favershamtowncouncil.gov.uk 07817 970012
5pm	Village Hall, Sheldwich	Cllr Bill Harbour Stephen Blythin David Simmons Lisa Stiffell (Clerk) Robert Perry Tim Valentine Dave Austin (Badlesmere) John & Sheila Nimmo Philip Weston Philip Scutt	bill@foxhillstud.com 07973 890671 stephen.blythin@btinternet.com davidsimmons@swale.gov.uk sblpc@live.com robdiperry@gmail.com timvalentine@swale.gov.uk dave@badlesmerelees.com johnsheila.nimmo@googlemail.com phil.weston236@outlook.com philscutt@gmail.com
9th March			
9:30	Plumford Farm	Andrew Keel Chris Elworthy Kathy Lockwood (Clerk)	andrewkeel@msn.com 07860 206321 chris.elworthy@ospringepc.org ospringepc@gmail.com

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11am	Palace Farm, Down Court Road, Doddington	<p>Cllr Cat Horn, Stalisfield PC Cllr Graham Cuthbert, Doddington PC Cllr Linda Morgan, Lynsted PC Cllr Vanessa Ross-Russel, Lynsted PC Cllr Sue Elworthy, Newnham PC Lynsted Parish Clerk</p> <p>Eastling (Clerk), Wendy Licence</p>	<p>linda_j_nb_morgan@yahoo.co.uk 07342 676655 vanessa@rossrussell.com 07766 464229 susan.elworthy@btinternet.com LKPC@hotmail.co.uk 01622 739324</p>
3pm	Teynham	Cllr Mike Whiting Dover Castle	MikeWhiting@Swale.gov.uk
4:30pm	Oare	Sonia Jackson	
5pm	Oare	Pippa Gladhill (20s Plenty)	pippagladhill@icloud.com
23rd March			
11:15	The Street	<p>Alastair Gould James Perkins Sarah Muteham (clerk)</p>	<p>AlastairGould@Swale.gov.uk jmp@queenelizabeths.kent.sch.uk boughtonclerk@gmail.com 07740 706189</p>
4pm	Teynham Community Hall	<p>Paul Townson Clive Brodigan Hayley Steel (clerk)</p>	<p>p.townson@teynhamparishcouncil.org chairman@teynhamparishcouncil.org clerk@teynhamparishcouncil.org</p>

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Next steps action list

Re QE _ headteacher keen. dma@queenelizabeths.kent.sch.uk