

NEW FOOTWAYS PROJECT

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

This report presents the results of the parish council's New Footways Project public consultation that ran from 1 September to 25 October 2021. The Beech Road Safety Working Group considers that the level of response achieved as at that date (110 responses from 87 households) is sufficient for the Parish Council to take soundly-based decisions on the project's next steps.

The consultation was on a conceptual design for new footways running along the village main road (Medstead Road and Kings Hill), consisting of:

- New on-road footways in the village centre and on the lower part of Kings Hill; and
- New off-road footways alongside Medstead Road as it runs past woodlands on the south side.

This conceptual scheme had passed an HCC initial safety audit in summer 2021. That safety audit had rejected a proposed on-road footway on the upper part of Kings Hill (beyond 39 Kings Hill), and so the consultation sought views on whether an alternative (off-road) footway would be supported.

The consultation also sought views on the existing short stretches of roadside footpath, and on the desirability of a 20mph speed limit and speed limit enforcement.

Consultation Methodology

- Consultation period: 1 September – 25 October 2021.
- Consultation documents available on Beech Parish Council website, with hard copies available on request.
- Publicised on the parish council website, on social media, at village social events, in the Beech News (published early October) and by leaflet delivered to every property in the parish.
- Four drop-in sessions at the village hall to allow residents to discuss with the Working Group.
- Response forms able to be submitted to the parish council by email or in hard copy to a special post box.

Executive Summary

A total of 110 consultation responses were received from 87 households, representing 38% of the households in Beech Parish.

The summary conclusions that can be drawn from the responses are as follows.

1. There was strong support (86%) for the project as a whole.
2. There was strong support (85%) for the proposed on-road footways in the Village Centre and on Kings Hill, so long as they can be designed to be a safe option in conjunction with HCC.
3. There was strong support (90%) for the proposed off-road footways next to Forestry England land on Medstead Road. However, strong reservations were expressed by a majority of residents of properties opposite the western section, and it is proposed to investigate their concerns further.

4. There was majority support (55%) for upgrading, in a manner sensitive to the natural woodland setting, the surface of the roadside footpath in the private woodland on upper Medstead Road. This would need to be negotiated with the landowner and, potentially, planning permission obtained. The precise nature of any such need won't become apparent until after the coming winter.
5. There were sensible suggestions for the upgrading, as part of the project, of the existing path to the A339. Meanwhile the parish council should consider a more frequent maintenance programme for this path, and attempt to educate horse riders to clear droppings from it.
6. There was strong support (80%) for a 20mph speed limit in the village centre and Wellhouse Road, should it become possible.
7. There was strong support (79%) for the use of unmanned Community SpeedWatch cameras, if they become available and supported by the police.
8. We might consider using '20 is plenty' signs in Wellhouse Road (and possibly in the village centre) as a temporary or permanent measure.
9. There was strong support (79%) for extending the project to a new off-road footway on upper Kings Hill to Alton Abbey.
10. There are numerous other more detailed comments that the Working Group will consider during the detailed design phase of the new footways.

Village Zones and Response Rates

Since some aspects of the proposals affect some parts of the village more than others, the responses have been classified into eight zones, according to the responder's address.

Zone No. & Name	Properties included	No. of properties	No. of responders	No. of properties responding	% of properties responding
Zone 1: Village Centre East	20-36 & 11-59 Medstead Rd	28	13	11	39
Zone 2: Village Centre West	72-98 & 61-99 Medstead Rd	34	28	22	65
Zone 3: Wellhouse Rd East	2-56 & 11A-45 Wellhouse Rd, Cramptons	45	15	12	27
Zone 4: Wellhouse Rd West	58-96 & 47-67 Wellhouse Rd	29	8	6	21
Zone 5: Bushy Leaze East	100-158 Medstead Rd	13	3	2	15
Zone 6: Bushy Leaze West	170-194 Medstead Rd	7	7	5	71
Zone 7: Kings Hill	Kings Hill, Old Park Farm, Alton Abbey	57	27	21	37
Zone 8: Parish Outliers	Basingstoke Rd, Wyards Farm area, Snode Hill, Thedden	18	9	8	44
Beech Parish	All properties	231	110	87	38

Summary of Consultation Responses & Parish Council Comments

Q.1 Do you support this project's objective of improving the safety of pedestrians to walk along the entire length of Medstead Road and Kings Hill?

Total responses: Yes 95 (86%) No 15 (14%)

There was strong support for the project objective.

Among those not expressing support, a number stated disagreement with one or more of the particular elements of the scheme. These issues are dealt with later.

Project needed at all? One respondent asserted that pedestrians have no problems walking through Beech, so the project is unnecessary. The response to this consultation suggests otherwise, as did responses to questionnaires preceding the Neighbourhood Plan (2016) and the Village Design Statement (2002). Another respondent stated that the whole concept of walking along Medstead Road and Kings Hill is dangerous and should not be encouraged. We agree that it is dangerous, but we don't agree that nothing should be done about it. The entire thrust of current policy at national and local government levels is to encourage and facilitate walking (and cycling). This project seeks a safer way to do so in Beech.

Traffic speed reduction. A handful of respondents preferred that the project's objective should be to reduce the speed of the traffic along Medstead Road and Kings Hill, with measures taken to achieve that rather than construct new footways. The parish council sees no reason to amend the objective, for the following two reasons:

1. It is already pursuing speed reduction alongside the footways project, as two complementary initiatives. That is why the consultation also asked about speed limits (Q.13) and speed cameras (Q.14). The aim is to have both footways and speed reduction. The speed reduction initiatives being pursued are:
 - Working with the regional '20 Is Plenty' organisation to have HCC change its policy, and permit all urban areas and built-up areas in villages to become 20mph zones.
 - Liaison with the local community policing unit to ensure that the speeding problem in Beech is recognised by them (it is) and that Beech gets its fair share of available mobile police speed enforcement patrols.
 - Working to set up a trial of a fixed Community SpeedWatch camera, for 'educational' speed enforcement, which is now underway in co-operation with HCC and with the help of our local county and district councillors.

None of these initiatives requires major funds from the parish council, so they do not impact upon our ability to pursue a footways project.

NB. Currently, to the police and HCC, the accident rate in Beech (in terms of KSI – people killed or seriously injured) doesn't merit any more action on speed limits and enforcement than is currently in place. In that respect, Beech is no different to hundreds of other rural villages. Also HCC policy is not to install new speed humps, pinch points or similar physical traffic calming measures (although they may well not apply this to an on-road footway, which would be the first in Hampshire, although preceded elsewhere).

2. Even if all traffic were to adhere to the speed limit, it is still potentially hazardous to pedestrians walking along the road (e.g. failing to give enough clearance to pedestrians, especially when

opposing vehicles are passing). Pedestrians hit at 30mph, or even 20mph, come off badly. So there is justification for the footways project in isolation of any speed reduction initiatives.

Horse riders and cyclists. One respondent asked that the objective be expanded to cover cyclists and horse riders. We do not believe this is practical, because formal HCC-approved design of the new footways to also be able to simultaneously accommodate cyclists and horse riders would greatly increase the width of the footways, and hence the cost of constructing them. We believe the use of the new footways by pedestrians will not be so intense as to prevent their informal use by horse riders and cyclists (particularly children) if they so choose, in much the same way as the footpath to the A339 is used by some horse riders and cyclists now.

Safety of all road users. One respondent worried that the emphasis on pedestrians would come at the expense of the safety of other road users. This is an important point. There is no objective or desire to reduce the safety of other road users, including vehicle users. HCC will have oversight over the design and safety of any scheme that is pursued, and would ensure that the safety of all road users is preserved.

Q.2/3 Do you support the provision of a new on-road footway in the village centre (27-91 Medstead Road) on the south side of the road?

Q.4/5 Do you support the provision of a new on-road footway on the south side of Kings Hill (1-39 Kings Hill)?

Village Centre on-road footway	Total responses:	Yes 93 (85%)	No 17 (15%)
	<i>Village Centre responses:</i>	<i>Yes 37 (90%)</i>	<i>No 4 (10%)</i>
Kings Hill on-road footway	Total responses:	Yes 93 (85%)	No 17 (15%)
	<i>Kings Hill responses:</i>	<i>Yes 21 (78%)</i>	<i>No 6 (22%)</i>

There was strong support for the proposed on-road footways in both the Village Centre and Kings Hill. In respect of the stretches of road where they live, there was strong support from Village Centre residents, and clear majority support from Kings Hill residents.

Origin of the scheme. One respondent asked for more information on why the low-kerbed version of the on-road footway had been put forward. The answer is that it was selected because of (i) its perceived superior distinctiveness in demarcating the 'shared space' of the on-road footway from the rest of the carriageway, which should make it more effective in encouraging vehicles to drive more carefully, and (ii) its successful operation (for over 9 years) on an A-road in South Perrott, Dorset, to the satisfaction of the residents.

Maintaining overall road safety. Some respondents, both for and against the concept, were concerned that the narrowing of the road by the on-road footways would make the road more dangerous for all road users. Our expectation is that the on-road footway, together with appropriate new traffic signage, will itself cause vehicles to drive more slowly and cautiously in this section than they do now, because the on-road footway makes the road **look** narrower. But, actually, the carriageway width (including on-road footway) will not be reduced, so that vehicles will still be able to pass each other (and other road users), but the on-road footway is designed to lead to higher priority and consideration given to pedestrians. In general, the on-road footway is intended to be on the outside of bends, thus maximising the visibility of pedestrians. The parish council will be guided by HCC advice on design and road safety at the detailed design stage. If the on-road footway cannot be designed to the satisfaction of HCC in road safety terms, it will not be built.

Alternative off-road footways. A couple of respondents preferred off-road footways in these sections. One of our guiding principles has been not to alter the frontage of residential properties, if at all possible, and so predominantly off-road footways in these sections are ruled out.

The kerb (or not). A low kerb (20mm) has been put forward as a solution that strongly demarcates the on-road footway from the rest of the road. But concerns have been expressed about its safety for cyclists in particular, and how it will be affected by debris (i.e. shingle etc) in the road, and its effect on surface water drainage on the road. We will liaise further with cyclists and horse riders on this matter, and then take the views of HCC, from a road safety and maintenance perspective, during detailed design. We are confident that a safe and visually distinctive separation can be achieved between the road surface and the on-road footway.

Chicanes. One respondent suggested a chicane to slow traffic on Kings Hill. Whilst HCC does not support new physical traffic calming measures such as speed humps and pinch points, it may be worth exploring with them whether a chicane feature can be factored into the detailed design of an on-road footway.

The Medstead Road/Wellhouse Road junction. Several respondents expressed concern that the on-road footway on the south side of the road, as described, would be an unsafe solution around the bend at the Wellhouse Road junction, and on the narrowest stretch of road that runs about 20 metres east of the junction. We share these concerns and fully expect that a modified solution will be necessary in this local area in order to meet HCC's road safety standards. It is too early to speculate precisely what that modified solution will be, as it will be developed during detailed design.

The Kings Hill bend. Similarly several respondents expressed concern about an on-road footway on the inside of the sharp bend at the bottom of Kings Hill which, as described, would be unsafe for pedestrians as cars suddenly encounter them when driving up around the blind bend. We share these concerns about the transition from the woodland footpath to the on-road footway. This transition will be developed during detailed design with road safety input from HCC.

Other matters raised in the consultation responses. Other matters identified in comments that will be factored in during detailed design will be:

- Durability of construction materials (taking into account the regular heavy surface water flow, with stone and other debris).
- Maintenance responsibility, method and cost. The working assumption is that, once built, on-road footways form part of HCC's carriageway and will be maintained by them at their cost.
- Interface with driveways.
- Accompanying road signage.
- Night visibility of footway.
- Cutting back of roadside hedges.

Alternative schemes. Other ideas put forward by respondents to regulate traffic flow in these sections, but not supported by the parish council, were:

- One way priority signs, as at under the Four Marks Lymington Bottom railway bridge, giving traffic (coming up the hill?) priority over oncoming traffic. This type of arrangement is not suitable for use over extended lengths of road, as in the Village Centre and on Kings Hill, depending (as they do) on having clear visibility of the oncoming traffic on the far side of the 'narrow road'.

- Traffic light control to give alternate one-way movement. Given the length of these sections of road (several hundred metres each) we don't believe that one-way traffic light control is practical – especially since residents exiting their drives would not be aware of the current direction of flow. It would also over-urbanise the village.
- A permanent one-way system around Medstead Rd/Kings Hill (one direction) and Wivelrod Rd/Snode Hill (the other direction). The road through Wivelrod and Thedden is significantly narrower and twistier than through Beech, and completely unsuitable for regular use by heavier vehicles. It isn't a realistic candidate for handling significant traffic on a permanent basis. Such a one way system would embed permanently the strong complaints of residents when the road through Beech is closed for repair.

Q.6/7 Do you support the provision of a new off-road footway alongside the eastern section of Bushy Leaze Wood (opposite 100-158 Medstead Road)?

Q.8/9 Do you support the provision of a new off-road footway alongside the western section of Bushy Leaze Wood (opposite 174-188 Medstead Road)?

Bushy Leaze East off-road footway	Total responses:	Yes 99 (90%)	No 11 (10%)
	<i>Bushy Leaze East responses:</i>	<i>Yes 3 (100%)</i>	<i>No 0 (0%)</i>
Bushy Leaze West off-road footway	Total responses:	Yes 99 (90%)	No 11 (10%)
	<i>Bushy Leaze West responses:</i>	<i>Yes 1 (14%)</i>	<i>No 6 (86%)</i>

There was strong support for the proposed new off-road footways alongside the Forestry England land at Bushy Leaze Wood. In respect of the stretches of road where they live, there was very strong support from residents of 100-158 Medstead Road (albeit from a low turnout), but strong opposition from the residents of 174-194 Medstead Road.

Alternative on-road footways. Several respondents preferred to see an on-road footway throughout the whole of this section, extending further alongside the private woodland up to the Kings Hill bend. Their argument was that the on-road footway would here, too, act to narrow the perceived road width, and promote slower and more careful driving. Some argued that slowing the traffic here (as well as in the Village Centre) may also act to reduce through traffic cutting through from Four Marks to the A339. Some also argued that on-road footways here would also deliver a more consistent solution, throughout most of the village, for all road users, which would be safer for all concerned. Others argued that the presence of off-road footways will act to encourage drivers to go faster than they do at present.

We don't agree with these arguments, for the following reasons:

- Unlike the Village Centre and Kings Hill, these sections of road are not densely lined with houses on both sides of the road, and don't have a 'built-up' feel. The street scene is overwhelmingly rural and woodland, and the road is straight or gently curving, with good visibility of the road ahead. Our judgement is that an on-road footway here would not necessarily reduce traffic speed. Note that there is already a rudimentary on-road footway, the 'twin white lines', alongside the eastern section of Bushy Leaze Wood; it has not noticeably reduced vehicle speeds when pedestrians are present, and many pedestrians still feel unsafe within those twin white lines.
- Pedestrians are fairly infrequent on these sections of road at present, so vehicles are already not usually impeded by pedestrians. So we believe that there will be no significant change to vehicle speeds on this stretch if pedestrians are taken off the carriageway altogether onto off-road footways.

- We do not believe that consistency of type of footway is a material benefit. For pedestrians, walking routes everywhere are typically very varied over relatively short distances – it’s normal. In the proposed scheme, each continuous stretch of on-road or off-road footway is several hundred metres long. For drivers there are just two discrete stretches of on-road footway that are out of the ordinary, but which will no doubt have some HCC warning signage; we don’t consider that to be confusing for drivers.

Accordingly we see no disadvantage, and plenty of advantage, in taking pedestrians off the road and onto off-road footways here, given that there is clearly land available roadside to do it. We see this as a superior solution for pedestrians. We prefer to tackle excessive vehicle speed here by means of available speed limits and enforcement (see comments at Q.1).

Damage to the woodland. A few respondents objected to damage to the woodland. This would not occur. On the section east of the Bushy Leaze entrance there is a wide HCC-owned strip of land alongside the road, well clear of the woodland, more than enough for an off-road footway. To the west of the Bushy Leaze entrance, the footway would sit within the roadside strip recently cleared by Forestry England to avoid interference by vegetation with the highway. Similarly, installing a 1 to 1.5m wide footway alongside the road would cause relatively minimal ecological damage or loss of habitat.

Conversely a couple of respondents said that the paths would be better within the woodland itself. We disagree. The footway is at the roadside because it is for people walking up and down the village, not for excursions into the woods. A roadside path will be considered more secure by some users and, unlike within the woodland, can be constructed so as to be all-weather. The intention would be to design the path so as to be sympathetic to its rural environment, much like the path to the A339.

Lighting. Some respondents asked about lighting the footway. The working assumption is that, as roadside footways, there will be some light from streetlamps. It would be good to have vegetation cleared from around the streetlamps so that the light is thrown further.

Privacy/overlooking. This is a known concern of residents in roadside houses opposite the proposed footway, to the west of the Bushy Leaze Wood entrance. These concerns will be addressed during the detailed design stage.

Other matters raised in the consultation responses. Other matters identified in comments that will be factored in during detailed design will be:

- Height of footway above, and distance from, the road – with respect to both privacy of neighbours and safety (i.e. to avoid the need for any railings to prevent falling into the road).
- Bridging the drainage grips and ditches.
- All-weather, rural-looking, porous surface, capable of withstanding cyclists and horses who are likely to use the footways.
- Natural green verge/vegetation between footway and road.
- Any requirements to screen the footway from houses opposite (to be considered alongside any security concerns about being visible from the road).
- Intermediate access onto the footway from each house opposite.
- At each end of each section of off-road footway, a sensitive transition to other footway/footpath configurations.
- Maintenance responsibility, requirements, frequency and costs.

Q.10 Would you support the provision of a new off-road footway on the north verge/bank of Kings Hill, running from 72 Kings Hill to Alton Abbey (currently deferred)?

Total responses:	Yes 87 (79%)	No 15 (14%)	Don't Know 8 (7%)
<i>Kings Hill responses:</i>	<i>Yes 20 (74%)</i>	<i>No 6 (22)%</i>	<i>Don't Know 1 (4%)</i>

There was clear majority support for taking forward an off-road footway on the upper section of Kings Hill, up to Alton Abbey, including clear majority support from residents of Kings Hill.

We will therefore add this section back into the project, with the next step being to further investigate/confirm land ownership in this section and the practical feasibility of an off-road footway here. Note that this section, and any further westward footway extension along Abbey Road, would be the lowest priority sections to be constructed (see Q.15).

Would it be used? A few respondents questioned whether the footway here would be used. The response to the consultation suggests it would be used. This section of Kings Hill is walked, and is considered by those who do so to be the most dangerous section of road to walk in the village.

Is it practical, and is the north side best? This was asked by a couple of respondents. On first inspection, there appears to be much more HCC-owned land to play with on the north side of the road rather than the south (subject to confirmation). The footway would be elevated above the road in that part running up to the crest of the hill, but not elevated over the last stretch to the Abbey. It would be no steeper than walking on the road itself.

Alternative on-road footway. A handful of respondents wanted a continuation of the Kings Hill on-road footway up through this section. But HCC has already rejected an on-road footway here on safety grounds, in its initial safety audit.

Too much urbanisation/ecological damage. A couple of respondents raised these points. We believe that a simple rural path design, similar to that running down to the A339, would not spoil the rural environment, nor cause any significant ecological or habitat damage. Subject to the amount of land available, there could also be some replanting of vegetation.

Beech/Medstead gap. One respondent was concerned that a footway to the Abbey would weaken the gap (in planning terms) that should prevent development between Beech and Medstead. We believe that the gap would not be compromised by the presence of a footway to the Abbey alone.

Q.11 The existing footpath in the private woodland, running parallel to upper Medstead Road, has a natural surface. In your opinion, should this surface be improved to make it suitable all year round?

Total responses:	Yes 60 (55%)	No 23 (21%)	Don't Know 27 (25%)
<i>Kings Hill responses:</i>	<i>Yes 11 (41%)</i>	<i>No 9 (33%)</i>	<i>Don't Know 7 (26%)</i>
<i>Bushy Leaze West responses:</i>	<i>Yes 2 (29%)</i>	<i>No 4 (57%)</i>	<i>Don't Know 1 (14%)</i>

Note: This footpath was cleared and is owned by the current owner of the private woodland. Any improvement of the path surface would need to be with the owner's agreement.

There was a narrow majority (55%) of improving the path surface, rising to 72% if 'Don't Knows' are excluded. Excluding 'Don't Knows', there was a 50:50 split on the issue from residents of Kings Hill and upper Medstead Road, the most likely frequent users.

Arguments made **for** surface improvement were:

- The path may/will become muddy in winter months;
- Some parts are uneven, with the odd root trip hazard;
- Some improvement to rectify the above will make it more attractive to people to use, especially in winter months.
- The path needs to be safe it is part of a longer village footway scheme.

Many also said that any improvement should be as natural in appearance as possible, to preserve the woodland environment. Adding scalplings, gravel or crushed hardcore to the surface were suggested.

The argument **against** surface improvement was principally to avoid spoiling the natural woodland environment. One respondent mentioned the possibility that fallen leaves will cover and partially negate any improved surface.

There would seem to be a possible middle ground here, i.e. minimal surface improvement, perhaps only to those stretches that need it, using a loose material that looks in keeping with the woodland. We would suggest, however, that the performance of the path over the winter months is monitored, to get a better idea of what might be required. The condition of the path surface since its construction in April has been good so far. We believe that would be essential that this footpath is fit for purpose all year round in order for it to be an integral part of a longer footway network.

A number of other issues were raised by respondents.

Availability of the path. It was pointed out that, as a private path, permission for the public to use it can be withdrawn at any time, making reliance on it as part of a longer footway scheme problematic. Our response is that the owner initiated the clearance of the roadside path for the common benefit of the residents, and we see no reason why the owner should wish to rescind that permission. If permission were to be withdrawn, the parish council would lobby the (then) owner to reverse the decision; we would cross that bridge if and when we come to it. It was also pointed out that parish council funds should not be spent on the path unless some form of agreement were made with the owner that guarantees it remains permanently open to the public; we agree with those sentiments.

Alternative on-road footway. See our comments on this subject at Q6/Q8.

Screening from the road. When the footpath was constructed a screen of bushes and small trees was left between the path and the road, to screen the elevated path from the houses opposite, on upper Medstead Road and at the Kings Hill bend. One respondent asked that the screening vegetation be thinned out to allow more visibility from the road for personal safety reasons, but this is probably undesirable due to the privacy concerns of some of the residents living opposite (who complain that the screening is not effective enough).

Night use and lighting. The existing street lamps do not light this path. One respondent considered this a reason for an on-road footway here instead (but see our comments at Q6/Q8). Lighting this path will be a challenge (and may be expensive for the parish council to install and run), and may not be achievable whilst retaining the path's natural woodland feel. It may be that this path remains a less attractive route at night unless and until a future project tackles it. Meanwhile night users may use a torch for their safety on the path – much as night walkers on that stretch of road tend to do

now. In general we would expect the use of all the footways in darkness to be a fraction of their use in daylight.

Eastern end of the path. It was pointed out that the ramp down from the woodland path deposits walkers at the roadside, almost forcing them into the road. Clearly this would be rectified by the construction of an off-road footway eastwards from this point to the Bushy Leaze entrance. In the meantime it will be desirable to take measures to encourage walkers to continue east on an informal track alongside or through the open-access Forestry England woodland.

Western end of the path. The woodland path emerges onto HCC-owned grass verge at the Kings Hill bend. The safe transition to an on-road footway has been discussed at Q2/Q4. One respondent was concerned about the footpath (at both ends) giving access to the woods for traveller incursions and the like. We see no reason why the transitions away from the woodland path should enlarge the current access to the woods at all.

Maintenance. One respondent raised the issue of maintaining this path. Current maintenance (which is confined to a little strimming and pruning) is carried out by the landowner. Maintenance arrangements of any improved path would form part of prior discussions to be had with the landowner.

Q.12 Do you have any comments on the existing off-road footpath running from 27 Medstead Road to the A339?

Numerous issues were raised.

Adequacy of current maintenance. Numerous respondents complained of grass/nettles overhanging the footpath, and the need to maintain the surface properly. We will review the current annual maintenance programme and adjust it to suit, particularly the strimming frequency. Also, HCC is due this winter to cut out dead wood and dying ash trees from the tree screen between the path and the road, and clear branches from interfering with the path.

Screening from the road. Some respondents like being shielded from the road, others like the reassurance of being visible from the road. Part of the path is screened from the road, the middle section is not. On balance we will not be asking HCC to cut down all the vegetation on the verge side. As another commented, further 'manicuring' of the verge would go against retaining a 'natural' look.

Lighting. One respondent mentioned that the path is not lit at night. There has been no demand for additional lighting of this path, over and above any partial illumination from the street lamps.

Use by horses. A few respondents complained of horse droppings and their effect on the path surface. Another pointed out that it is difficult for a pedestrian to pass a horse on the path. Horse riders use the path for safety reasons too. Regarding droppings, this may be a case of trying to foster an etiquette of removal by the riders concerned. Perhaps there should also be an etiquette of a horse giving way to pedestrians, especially those with pushchairs.

Upgrading the path. Some respondents wish the path to be upgraded to a more all-weather surface (to help pushchairs, wheelchairs and more pedestrians to use it) and possibly wider too (to help pedestrians to pass others, including horses). It would seem to make sense to upgrade this path, in due course, to the same specification proposed for the new off-road footways further up Medstead Road. Such an upgrade could include intermediate access points to the path opposite nos. 20 and 24

Medstead Road, as suggested by one respondent. (NB. Pedestrians coming from Snode Hill can already use the entrance to Wyards Farm cottages, almost directly opposite Snode Hill, to access the footpath.)

Pedestrian crossing across the A339. One respondent advocated a pedestrian crossing over the A339 at the Medstead Road junction, at the end of this footpath. This is something that might be pursued with HCC at the time of detailed design of any upgrade.

Q.13 Would you support the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the village centre (including Wellhouse Road), if it were to become permitted under HCC policy?

Total responses:	Yes 88 (80%)	No 22 (20%)
Village Centre responses:	Yes 39 (95%)	No 2 (5%)
Wellhouse Road responses:	Yes 18 (78%)	No 5 (22%)

There was a substantial majority in the village as a whole in favour of a 20mph speed limit in the Village Centre and Wellhouse Road, with a very strong majority among residents in the Village Centre, and a clear majority among Wellhouse Road residents.

The parish council will therefore continue to lobby HCC in liaison with the '20 Is Plenty' campaign and other villages. Evidence shows that accidents at 20mph result in significantly less injury or damage than at 30mph.

Turning to some points made by respondents:

No need for 20mph. Some said that 20mph is not necessary in the Village Centre, and there have not been any serious accidents. In reply, the concern of residents is that 30mph is too fast for the Village Centre, whether or not the on-road footway is installed, as borne out by the response to this consultation. There may not have been many accidents, but there have been regular near misses. There was an accident in which a pedestrian was injured only 18 months ago.

No need if an on-road footway is built. This was the contention of one respondent. Another respondent stated that 20mph is **definitely** needed if the on-road footway is in place.

There should be road humps etc. as well. It is against HCC policy to install new speed humps, pinch points or similar physical traffic calming measures.

Drivers won't respect a 20mph limit. A number of respondents made the point that, as many drivers don't respect the 30mph limit, they won't respect 20mph either. We believe that a 20mph limit should reduce vehicle speeds in the Village Centre, because 20mph would appear to be a credible limit in what looks and feels like an enclosed, built-up area. The 20mph limit should result in a significant degree of voluntary compliance, with even more compliance if the on-road footway is installed. And there should also be a tendency (supported by evidence from '20 is Plenty' for those who, say, drove at 35mph in the 30mph limit to now drive at around 25mph in a new 20mph limit in the same place. It all helps. Of course some will still drive too fast, which is a matter for enforcement.

It will only work if there is enforcement against speeding. We agree that speeding enforcement is necessary to tackle excessive and/or persistent speeding drivers. We are in particular exploring

Community SpeedWatch cameras (see Q14), which would work alongside existing police mobile speed traps.

Speeding isn't a problem in Wellhouse Road. The support from Wellhouse Road residents for inclusion in a 20mph limit suggests otherwise. It is an enclosed, very narrow road that would not look out of place in a 20mph zone. And it too has no footway (nor is one proposed).

20mph should apply throughout Beech. A couple of respondents wanted the entire Beech 30mph zone converted to 20mph. In response, the direction of travel of Government policy is towards 20mph limits in residential areas. However, this is likely to be interpreted differently by each highways authority, and HCC policy has yet to emerge on this subject. If HCC changes its policy to allow new 20mph zones, it may choose to revert to permitting them only in urban areas and built-up residential areas in villages. In Beech's case, that might point to the Village Centre only. But, as and when HCC's policy changes, the extent of a 20mph zone is a discussion we can have with them. We would be looking for a zone that includes the Village Centre and Wellhouse Road as a minimum.

Required sight lines (for new development) will be shorter. One respondent pointed out that the clear sight lines (in both directions) from new driveway access points onto Medstead Road will be shorter in a 20mph zone than in the current 30mph zone – and that this may facilitate new housing development that is currently ruled out. We believe this issue is a secondary one compared with wider road safety and traffic speed reduction.

Q.14 Would you support the use of unmanned Community SpeedWatch cameras (speed and number plate recording) in Beech, if it were to become supported by Hampshire Constabulary?

Total responses: Yes 87 (79%) No 23 (21%)

There was a substantial majority in the village as a whole in favour of the possible future use of unmanned Community SpeedWatch cameras in Beech.

The parish council has now embarked upon a short trial of an unmanned Community SpeedWatch camera system, endorsed by HCC, to help establish the practical feasibility of such a system.

Turning to some points made by respondents:

What are these cameras? Community SpeedWatch is primarily an educational scheme. The sanctions are chiefly confidential warning letters, which could ultimately result in more serious sanctions for persistent offenders. The scheme is usually implemented intermittently by roadside volunteers with a speed recording device (writing down number plates). What is being considered is a new concept (with the same type of enforcement) of, instead, a fixed camera that records speeds and number plates, that can operate for longer periods, and so be more effective. The position of the fixed camera can, in theory, be changed periodically. The equipment is significantly cheaper than police ANPR speed cameras.

Why do we need them when we have police speed traps? The police do use hand-held (and vehicle mounted) speed cameras in Beech, but only for short periods each time. Speed data shows that it is not an effective deterrent. We are looking for a more permanent, and therefore more effective, deterrent.

Community SpeedWatch is ineffective. The premise is that drivers will be deterred from speeding in the village more effectively by a permanent camera system than by infrequent logging of vehicles by roadside volunteers, which is what happened previously.

It will mainly catch residents and so will be divisive. We believe that 'educational' speed enforcement like this should be just as applicable to Beech residents as others.

It would be an invasion of privacy. Community SpeedWatch systems (whether using manual or photographic recording of number plates) do not automatically identify the owner of the vehicle or driver. The use of the national vehicle database is restricted to the police and DVLA and is not available to local SpeedWatch volunteer teams.

Warnings should be given to residents before these cameras are deployed. That is a sensible suggestion.

It will be too much burden on the police. In a Community SpeedWatch scheme the vast majority of the effort (and the management of the camera) is performed by the local SpeedWatch volunteer team itself.

Can you have an 'average speed' system? It may be possible to deploy a pair of cameras to calculate the average speed of a vehicle between those two points. We will be investigating this as part of the trial that has been set up.

This shouldn't take preference over the footways. If unmanned Community SpeedWatch cameras are supported by the police and HCC then they could be a quick and relatively cheap measure that could be introduced, to the benefit of at least part of the village. We would need to put in place a separate CSW team so as not to divert resources from the footways project.

Q.15 Do you agree with the proposed prioritisation for constructing new footways (starting with village centre, then moving west up the hill)?

Total responses: Yes 97 (88%) No 13 (12%)

There was strong support from the village as a whole for the proposed construction prioritisation, with clear majority support in each area of the village. The prioritisation permits the footways to be built in stages (which is likely to be inevitable given that funds will only become available over time), and lessons can be learned after the completion of each stage.

Apart from those few disagreeing with the footway scheme altogether, or parts of it, there were a couple of challenges to our prioritisation:

- One respondent wanted the on-road footway to be tried out on Kings Hill first before implementation in the Village Centre. We disagree, because the need for a successful on-road footway in the Village Centre is greater than on Kings Hill. If funds are limited, then it will be important to deploy them first at the points of greatest need. We do not see that road safety can be worsened by constructing an on-road footway in the Village Centre, and so we would prefer to start there.
- A few others considered the top of Kings Hill to be the most dangerous section of road to walk on, and so we should start there. We disagree. All sections of the road have their own dangers. We have chosen to prioritise the sections by the number of people likely to benefit. In general,

most people leave their houses to walk down the hill (to the village facilities or Alton). So the assumption is that foot traffic will be heaviest in the village centre and progressively lighter as one moves up the hill to the west.

- Another respondent thought that those who are going to walk in the Village Centre probably already do so as it is easier than using their car. Whereas we know that there are people who live in the Village Centre who drive 100-150m from their homes to the village hall because they feel it so unsafe to walk.

Since the aim of the project is to permit residents to walk safely through the entire village, every resident will have the benefit of every piece of footway infrastructure throughout the village.

Q.16 Do you have any other comments on the project that you have not supplied elsewhere?

Pedestrian crossings on Medstead Road. One respondent asked for structured pedestrian crossings over Medstead Road (i) at the path up to the Recreation Ground, and (ii) at the entrance to Bushy Leaze Wood, along with better visibility for pedestrians who wish to cross at these locations. In reply, any issues of restricted visibility can be looked at – it may just be a case of a householder trimming back some hedges. More structured road crossings are generally only justifiable where there are no or few natural breaks in the traffic that allow pedestrians to cross the road – which is not the case on Medstead Road. They would also detract from the rural look of the village.

Why aren't there more 30mph reminder road signs in Beech? The use of 30mph repeater signs, in zones where there are street lights, is not consistent with road traffic regulations. (So some lawyers have successfully argued that the presence of these repeater signs indicates that the entire 30mph zone has not been correctly implemented.) There used to be some of these signs in Beech but they were removed by HCC (with one or two mistakenly left in place).

What about cutting the overgrown vegetation throughout the village and approaches? It is the responsibility of the landowner (perhaps prompted by HCC) to cut back growth emanating from their property, and the responsibility of HCC to cut back growth emanating from their roadside verges etc.

Appendix: Full Listing of Consultation Form Responses

See separate document.