

Transport Evidence Report

for Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan



Transport Evidence Report for Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan

Overview

Fawkham Parish is not well served by sustainable modes of transport. Residents are reliant on cars, even for short journeys.

The main lane in Fawkham runs north to south along the bottom of the valley for some 5 km (3.2 miles). It is a narrow, rural C-class road, mostly lined with hedgerows. There is only a footway for 800m (0.5 miles) along one side of its length, and no verge. The absence of footways, the apparent and actual speed of traffic, and absence of lighting means it represents an unsafe walking environment.

The 2019 village survey of Fawkham clearly shows dependency on private cars. There is no bus or train service. As many sections are less than 4.5m wide the road is too narrow for a bus service, which requires 6m width.

The lane is dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians, with many blind bends, and the carriageway width allows no segregation between cars and pedestrians or cyclists.

Other lanes, including Castle Hill, Scudders Hill, Manor Lane and Sun Hill are even narrower, often single car width, and also unlit.

Walking

The Village Survey 2019 showed only 15.5% of respondents regularly walk as a means of transport to travel to a destination. There is no street lighting, no footways apart from one 0.5 mile section, and the narrow width of the lanes does not allow segregation for pedestrians.

Access to facilities on foot is not possible from most houses within the Parish (the Community Facilities Evidence Report contains further details). Valley Road links the three separate clusters which make up the hamlet of Fawkham. There is a footway along one side of Valley Road for approximately 800 m (0.5 miles), from Michaels Lane to opposite the village school, and 115m south of the village hall. This is situated on a bank above the carriageway and is maintained by Kent County Council (KCC), the Local Highways Authority. To reach the start of the footway from the Fawkham Green area requires pedestrians to walk in the carriageway for 150 metres. A landowner has installed a stile to provide access closer to the southern start of the footway from Small Grains via a field, subject to written permission.

Although the northern most 10 or so houses are close to the facilities of Longfield, situated the other side of the railway bridge, it is unsafe to walk there under the narrow bridge, which has no footway. There is no prospect of a footway being created due to the narrow road width. Public right of way (PROW) SD212 runs uphill through a field and woods leading to Longfield in 600-700m, but reaching it involves walking along Valley Road, and there is no footway. The PROW is often muddy and is unlit. There are plans proposed to develop a footway through woodland from Salts Farm depot to Longfield as part of a planning application for 26 dwellings at that site. This would allow some residents to reach Longfield on foot without walking under the railway bridge. However, once Longfield is reached a stepped bridge over the railway line needs to be crossed to reach any of the services/facilities, which does not make access feasible for pushchairs/wheelchairs etc (even if they were able to navigate across the field and wood to reach the footbridge).

Approximately 30 houses in the Baldwin's Green/Castle Hill area can reach Hartley by walking up Castle Hill, although this is single track road with no footway or lighting. From the bottom of the hill to The Parade at Church Road is approximately 1km, where there is a small convenience

store. PROW SD221 runs from Castle Hill, close to Baldwins Green, via Fairby Lane, to the Ash Road in Hartley, from where Hartley Post Office can be reached - a distance of 1.9 km from Baldwin's Green.

Cycling

The "Manual for Streets", published by the Department for Transport and others, states that cyclists are particularly sensitive to traffic conditions and that high speeds or high volumes of traffic tend to discourage cycling¹. Cycling Fawkham's lanes is unlikely to be desirable and would require a level of confidence, fitness and proficiency that most residents do not possess.

The Village Survey 2019 showed only one person stated they regularly cycle as a means of transport, with only six (4.7%) cycling occasionally.

The local area lacks cycle routes and no proposals are listed in the Sevenoaks District Cycle Strategy to provide new cycle routes or infrastructure within the area. Limited cycle parking (five spaces) is provided at Longfield rail station and the Village Hall (three spaces).

Bus Service

There is no bus service in Fawkham and has not been since 1958. There are very limited bus services serving local villages, with several services due to be withdrawn by February 2023. Two services will remain from Longfield: one to Gravesend (6 a day Monday to Friday, running from Longfield between 07:44 to 18:16, 4 on Saturday, no Sunday service) and one to Bluewater/Darent Valley Hospital (4 a day Monday to Saturday, running from Longfield between 9:30 and 14:50, no Sunday service). There will be no bus service from Hartley or New Ash Green. Accessing the bus service needs a secondary means of transport. The distance to the closest bus service varies by location within the Parish. From February 2023, the closest bus stop will be at Longfield Station, approximately 650m from the closest house in Fawkham Parish. On an average basis, residents of the parish live more than 3.25km from a bus service.

As stated in the Sevenoaks District Transport Assessment 2018, "*Frequencies and operating hours are limited and so restrict the appeal of bus use in the area*"²

Rail Service

The closest station is Longfield from which there are two trains per hour to London Victoria: the fast service takes 31-34 minutes, and the slow service 51 minutes. The station is located 550m from the northern Parish boundary and 3km from Fawkham Green.

Ebbsfleet Station operates a High Speed rail service to London St Pancras (18 minutes journey time) and the Kent Coast. There is however no direct bus link from the local area to this station. The driving distance by car is 8.4 km (5.2 miles) from Baldwins Green and 11.1 km (6.9 miles) from the Fawkham Green area. There is adequate but expensive car parking.

¹ Manual for Streets, para 6.4.5

² Sevenoaks District Transport Assessment 2018 prepared by SWECO as part of the Local Plan Evidence Base, section 11.4.7

Private Cars

There is a high level of car/van availability in Fawkham, as shown by the 2011 Census data³, with 20.6% of households having 3 cars/vans and 12.6% of households having 4 or more. Only 3.3% of households in Fawkham do not have a car or van.

The levels of car availability in Fawkham are far higher than across the Sevenoaks District as a whole and far higher than in our adjoining ward of Hartley and Hodsoll Street.

Car or van availability:

	Fawkham	Hartley & Hodsoll St	Sevenoaks District
No cars or vans in household	3.3%	10%	13.1%
1 car or van in household	24.3%	36%	40.1%
2 cars or vans in household	39.3%	36%	33.8%
3 cars or vans in household	20.6%	12%	9.1%
4 or more cars or vans in household	12.6%	6%	4.0%

No on-street parking is possible due to the narrow width of the roads, apart from along a short section of Small Grains (although the road only extends in front of half of the 10 houses) and a 100m section of Fawkham Green Road to the front of Fairview Cottages.

Car Parks

- Village Hall

There is a car park next to the village hall which the Parish Council (PC) owns (in part, with a 999 year lease on the remainder). This has 24 spaces (including one disabled space) plus 14 spaces reserved for the residents of 1-7 Six Acre Cottages. The car park generally provides sufficient parking for hall users and residents of Six Acre Cottages, and is also used, by arrangement with the PC, for drop off and collection during school run times, with a fenced pathway provided to connect the car park with a school entrance. The car park is of little practical use beyond the uses above due to its location.

- Church

The church owns a car park situated next to St Mary's Church. There are no marked bays; the car park holds approximately 25 cars. This car park is used by church and graveyard visitors, and Steephill School makes a payment to enable the car park to be used for school drop off and collection. The car park is also freely used by people who walk on the Church Meadow and visit Churchdown Woods, a Local Wildlife Site accessed from the public right of way opposite.

- Public House

The Rising Sun Inn has a small car park for its clients' use. Often the cars of pub visitors are also parked along one side of the village green and along Fawkham Green Road/Small Grains.

Electric Charging Points

There is one electric charging point available to the public in Fawkham Parish, located at Brands Hatch Place hotel⁴. Provision of an electric charging point is a condition of planning from SDC for new residential development, but it is not known how many such conditions have been discharged/how many such points have been installed.

³ Source: ONS - 2011 Census (KS404EW)

⁴ As advised by SDC Planning Policy, July 2022

Fawkham's Roads

The C269 - Valley Road/Fawkham Road/Brands Hatch Road - is the main route through Fawkham and runs north-south along the valley floor for some 5 km (3.2 miles). For the purposes of this report, it will be referred to as "Valley Road" unless stated otherwise.

- The lane is a rural C-class road and does not have central road markings for most of its length.
- The lane mostly has a 40mph restriction, with a 30mph limit in the Fawkham Green area, and national speed limit applying to the Brands Hatch Road section (c.600m). Following a request by the Parish Council for the speed limits along Valley Road to be reviewed against the latest Department for Transport guidelines, Kent County Council has agreed that the current 30mph speed limit can be extended northwards by approximately 1km past the village school and village hall. The date for this to take effect is unknown at the time of writing.
- The lane has no verge, being bounded by mature hedgerows and, for most of the length, no footpath (as detailed above, there is a section along one side leading from Michaels Lane to the school, approximately 0.5miles in length).
- SDC's assessment within the Baldwins Green Conservation Area appraisal in 2003 says: *"Fawkham Road, [is] a minor country road linking Fawkham Green to the south with Longfield to the north....Access to major routes is not easy, due to the narrow rural nature of local roads, despite the relative proximity of the motorway network."*
- Valley Road takes traffic heading south to M25 junction 3/ A20/ M20, and heading north to the A2 at the Bean interchange and the M25 junction 2/Dartford Crossing, as well as to Bluewater Shopping Centre. Valley Road is used as a cut through between these major routes and, at times of congestion of any of these main routes, which is frequent, Valley Road becomes heavily trafficked.
- Traffic counts commissioned by Kent County Council in November 2019 showed the number of vehicles using Valley Road averaged 23,488 a week in both directions across three locations.
- The counts showed the average speed across the three locations was 31.1mph. In some locations the average speed exceeded the speed limit at that location.
- 5.5m is the minimum width for two cars to pass safely at low speed⁵. There are many sections of Valley Road which are less than 5.5m wide across both carriageways, especially in the section from the Castle Hill junction to the junction with Fawkham Green Road, meaning two cars cannot pass safely at low speed. A measurement survey was undertaken in July 2018 and the results are summarised here:
 - The narrowest measurement taken was 3.7m, far below the width at which two cars can safely pass at low speed.
 - None of the 23 measurements taken on the 2 km (1.3 mile) section of Valley Road between Scudders Hill and Sun Hill were at or above 5.5m, and only one was wider than 5m, at 5.04m. 15 were less than 4.5m, of which five were less than 4m. Nine wing mirrors were found on this section during the measurement exercise.
 - There is a pinch point where the lane passes under the viaduct arch which carries the railway line at the northern boundary of the parish.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405938/HS2_Rural_Road_Design_Criteria.pdf para A.6.3

- During heavy or persistent rain, the lane quickly becomes flooded, in some places across its full width. This is exacerbated by the run off of water down the steep valley sides, and also reflects the lack of drainage along most of its length (see the Surface Water Flooding Evidence Report for full details). There are also sections onto which large amounts of flint are washed down from the valley sides and banks during heavy rain.
- Traffic counts have shown that 7.3% of vehicles using the lane are class 3 or above (HGVs)⁶. A weight restriction of 7.5T except for access is in place along the entire length of the lane. The lane is used daily by HGVs accessing businesses on sites on Three Gates Road, Scudders Hill and the Fawkham Business Park. The weight restriction is frequently ignored, despite the installation of new signage advising HGV drivers of the restriction. A Lorry Watch scheme has been put in place, with illegal usage followed up with the businesses concerned. This has had some impact, with a local recycling company taking steps to stop their skip lorries using the lane. However, many HGVs still use the road illegally.
- During the Local Plan Consultations in 2018, Kent County Council Highways stated *“Both Fawkham Road and Valley Road are unsuitable for any significant increase in traffic”* and *“additional movements on Valley Rd and Fawkham Road ... would not be desirable.”*⁷

Appendix 1 contains detailed information about the other lanes in Fawkham Parish, with a summary given below. None of the lanes have lighting. To the east side of Valley Road:

Castle Hill

Castle Hill leads east from Valley Road up the valley side to join the Ash Road at Hartley Green. It is a curving single carriageway, with weight and width restrictions, very limited passing places and has been identified as “not suitable for increased traffic flows”⁸.

Steephill Road

This short one-way lane links Castle Hill and Valley Road.

Pennis Lane

Rural lane leading to Pennis House, Pennis Farm and Gay Dawn Farm; no through road.

Manor Lane

Manor Lane leads east from Valley Road up the valley side through West Yoke and onto the Ash Road. It is a curving, single carriageway with a 6’6” width restriction. It is frequently covered with flints washed down from its steep banked sides, making walking and cycling unsafe, especially in the dark. It has 2 or 3 informal passing spaces created by vehicles driving up the bank side or on private land by field gates. Manor Lane has a blind junction with Valley Road, at a point where Valley Road is around 4m wide.

Michaels Lane

Leading from Valley Road close to the Fawkham Green area to join Manor Lane. Narrow rural lane with blind bends and a width restriction.

Fawkham Green Road

Leading from the Fawkham Green area towards West Kingsdown. Narrow rural lane, with a width restriction.

⁶ KCC traffic count November 2019

⁷ KCC Highways DLPS7505

⁸ Sevenoaks District Transport Assessment 2018, prepared by SWECO, para 11.3.5

Small Grains

A short residential cul-de-sac built after the Second War World to accommodate 10 social houses; the road only extends in front of five of the houses, which causes some issues with parking, as residents have to park on the grassed amenity open space.

Crowhurst Lane

A narrow rural lane, with weight and width restrictions, which continues on from Fawkham Green Road, leading to West Kingsdown.

Rogers Wood Lane

Rogers Wood Lane runs east from Brands Hatch Road, close to that road's junction with Scratchers Lane. It leads to the Ash Road via Billet Hill and is used as a cut through to that road. It is a single carriageway with limited informal passing places and has weight and width restrictions.

Gallows Wood

A short no through road from Rogers Wood Lane; truncated following the M20's construction.

Also, Fawkham Manor Farm

A private road serving the Fawkham Manor estate, with two entrances onto Manor Lane.

And to the west side of Valley Road:

Three Gates Road

Three Gates Road runs broadly parallel to Valley Road along the ridgeline on the west side of the valley. It is a single carriageway with limited informal passing places and a width restriction.

Scudders Hill

Scudders Hill leads west from Valley Road, up the valley side to join Three Gates Road running to the south and Canada Farm Road running further west. It is a single carriageway with a width restriction.

Canada Farm Road

A very narrow rural lane leading on from Scudders Hill towards Green Street Green Road.

Speedgate Hill

Speedgate Hill leads west from Valley Road up the valley side to a cross road junction with Three Gates Road and Mussenden Lane. It is a straight road with a blind junction with Valley Road.

Mussenden Lane

A narrow lane leading from Three Gates Road west to Horton Kirby.

Sun Hill

A narrow lane with a weight restriction leading from the village green up the west side of the valley to join Three Gates Road at a cross road with Gabriel Spring Road East.

Gabriel Spring Road East

Narrow lane, a no through road, truncated by the construction of the M20.

School Lane

Narrow lane leading from Three Gates Road west to Horton Kirby.

Public Right of Ways

There are 17 Public Right of Ways (PROWs) within the parish, which cover some 9.44 km (5.87 miles) in total.

The majority of the PROWs are contained within the Parish and are well used for recreational walks. However, only three lead to other settlements in which facilities can be accessed: SD212 leads to Longfield, SD163 to the edge of New Ash Green and SD221 leads to the Ash Road in Hartley.

The PROWs can be seen on the attached map at Appendix 2.

Residents' Views of Transport

The main drawbacks to living in Fawkham, as stated in the Village Survey 2019, are seen as transport issues, particularly the traffic along, and condition of, Valley Road, together with the lack of public transport and difficulties for pedestrians. These drawbacks are expressed in a variety of ways. The number in brackets represents the number of respondents:

- Valley Road:
 - Dangerous in terms of speed (28)
 - Increasingly used by through traffic (13)
 - Too many large lorries, many of which are seen to be using it as a cut through (11)
 - Pot holes (9)
 - Not suitable for the volume of traffic (5)
 - Poorly maintained (4)
 - Not wide enough (3)
- Lack of public transport was mentioned 34 times, and “need a car” seven times.
- The lack of pavement/footway to walk into Longfield was often mentioned (25)
- “Unable to walk anywhere safely” was a frequently mentioned sentiment (8). This is borne out by the responses to the question on modes of transport which showed only 15.5% of respondents regularly walk as a mode of transport. Only one person stated that they regularly cycle, and only six (4.7%) cycle occasionally.
- Traffic on Castle Hill (1) and speed on the lanes (2) were also mentioned.

The survey also asked residents for suggestions to improve living in Fawkham. Many of these suggestions were focused on Valley Road:

- Reduce the speed limits (11)
 - Repair the pot holes (9) and repair/improve the road condition (3)
 - Introduce a width restriction (6)
 - Ban white vans/HGVs (3); limit access
 - Stop it being used as a cut-through (3)
 - Introduce speed bumps (3) or a form of traffic calming (5)
 - Paint a central white line along the entire length to prevent people driving on the wrong side (2)
 - Widen the road (1)
 - Introduce a toll (1)
-
- Public transport was requested 13 times, plus a bus ‘hopper’ service 10 times

Appendix 1: Lanes in Fawkham Parish

Name	Classification	Speed limit (mph)	Restrictions (weight or width)	Length (m) **
Brands Hatch Road	C269	Mostly National	7.5T except for access	828
Valley Road	C269	Mostly 40, some 30	7.5T except for access	2946
Fawkham Road	C269	40	7.5T except for access	1076
East of Valley Road:				
Three Gates Road	n/a	National	6'6" except for access	2711
Castle Hill	n/a	30	6'6" except for access. 7.5T except for access	477
Steephill	n/a	National*	One Way	386
Pennis Lane	n/a	National*	No through road	340
Manor Lane	n/a	National	6'6" except for access	1049
Michaels Lane	n/a	National*	6'6" except for access	500
Fawkham Green Road	n/a	c.100m 30, rest national	6'6" except for access	867
Small Grains	n/a	Unclear	No through road	87
Crowhurst Lane	n/a	National*	6'6" except for access. 7.5T except for access	603
Rogers Wood Lane	n/a	National*	6'6" except for access. 7.5T except for access	1040
Gallows Wood	n/a	National*	Dead end; truncated by M20	145
West of Valley Road:				
Three Gates Road	n/a	National	6'6" except for access	2711
Scudders Hill	n/a	National	6'6" except for access	432
Canada Farm Road	n/a	National	Unsuitable for wide vehicles	492
Speedgate Hill	n/a	National		614
Sun Hill	C291	National*	7.5T except for access	693
Gabriel Spring Road East	C291	National*	No through road; truncated by M20	882
School Lane	n/a	National*		177
Mussenden Lane	n/a	National*		446

* National assumed as no signage to indicate otherwise and not in a built up area

** Length of road within Fawkham Parish only

Appendix 2: Public Rights of Way in Fawkham Parish

