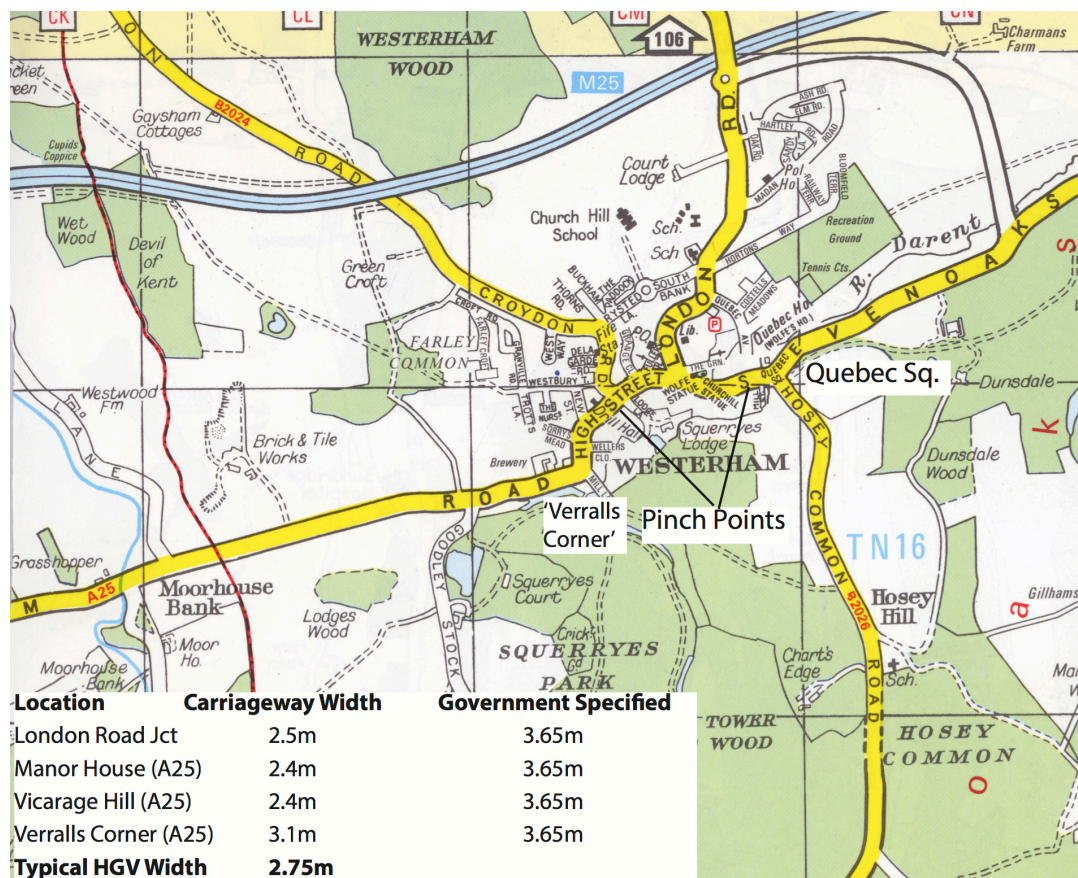


Impact of Traffic and Commercial Vehicles on Westerham

Westerham is the gateway to Kent and one of the jewels in its crown. It is an ancient market town and the road widths were designed for horse and cart. The A25 through Westerham has two sharp bends and two pinch points where the road narrows to 4.8 metres compared to government specification of 7.3 metres for this class of road. Vehicles frequently have to mount the kerb in order to pass. Inadequate pavements cause an intolerable situation for pedestrians, cyclists and the disabled. This document demonstrates the need to reduce the current volume of traffic and to oppose proposals to increase it.



The arterial road through Westerham (A25) has pinch points that do not meet the Secretary of State's defined criteria of a :

'Classified Road' (3.65m carriageway width)

'Local Distributor', 'Collector', 'Residential Street **with bus route**' (ALL 3.375m).

It does not, in fact, even meet the requirement for the lowest category - a

'Residential Street **non-bus route**' (2.75m)

(source - Newcastle C.C. government website)

Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy 2011 identifies 4 priority objectives

- Improving accessibility
- Tackling congestion
- Providing safer roads
- Improving air quality

SDC has determined to bring forward measures to alleviate congestion and tackle air quality issues in Westerham.

A25 Pinch Points do not meet statutory specifications for trunk roads

1. Manor House/Lodge Lane crossroads - width of road 4.8 metres

The road narrows to a severe pinch-point with Grade II listed shops with narrow pavement on the south side and the wall of the Grade II* listed Manor House which abuts the road on the north side. The carriageways at this point are 2.4 metres from centre line to kerb-edge. It is impossible for any other vehicle to pass an LCV or other wide vehicle at this point

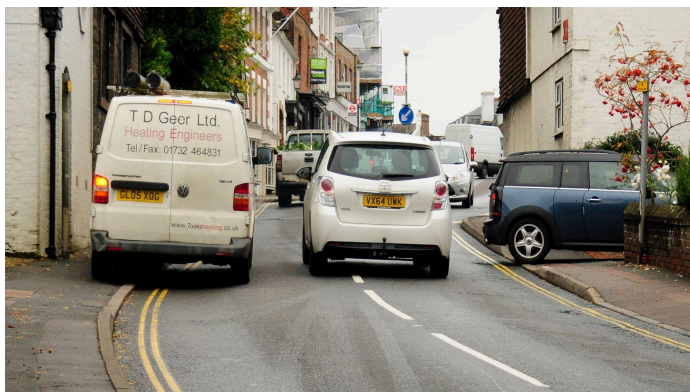


It is clear that only cars can pass at the pinch-points, not LCVs or HGVs



2. Yew Tree Cottage/Monks Way on Vicarage Hill - width of road 4.8 metres

The road suffers a severe pinch-point here due to the proximity of 'Yew Tree Cottage' and 'Monks Way' opposite (both Grade II listed). The pavement on the north side is so narrow as to be virtually unusable. The carriageways at this point are 2.4 metres from centre line to kerb-edge. It is impossible for any other vehicle to pass an LCV or other wide vehicle at this point



All taken by Yew Tree Cottage/Monks Way on Vicarage Hill, A25

Pedestrian Safety on pavements

When walking around the town there are several places where the pavement disappears on one side of the road and pedestrians are required to 'brave the traffic' as they have no option but to cross to the other side. This is particularly significant for the elderly and disabled, especially if they are visitors and unfamiliar with the town. This applies to both pinch-points and at the top of London Road.

Vicarage Hill residents Malcolm Basing and Irene Pearce have both reported dangerous incidents to KCC in the past. Mr Basing was forced to press himself against the wall to avoid being hit by a LCV coming up the hill which mounted the pavement at speed to avoid colliding with an oncoming lorry. The driver said he did not realise the road was so narrow. Kent County Council said there was nothing they could do to the layout of the junction not least because it was bracketed on both sides by listed buildings. In a similar incident Ms. Pearce was actually hit by a passing vehicle. (see photo below with a LCV mounting pavement against her house)



A25 Sharp Bends and Difficult Junctions

1. Verralls Corner

A notorious bend approaching ninety-degrees, and the scene of some nasty accidents over the years, most recently an HGV skidding on the wet road and colliding with the corner of this terrace of cottages.



HGVs negotiate the bend at Verralls Corner
Note Iron Girders defending house

2. Quebec Square

A difficult junction of two busy roads with a blind turning eastwards from the B2026 onto the A25. The B2026 is the road to the National Trust property 'Chartwell' which welcomes 230,000 visitors per year.



B2026

As can be seen the blind turning from the B2026 onto the A25 is a ninety degree junction with severely limited visibility.

The A25 approach to this junction from the east suffers an adverse camber, the scene of many accidents in wet weather where vehicles have hit properties surrounding the junction. In 2012 a large heavy wooden planting-trough was built on the pavement at the junction to protect the old cottages on the south side opposite Quebec House (Grade I listed National Trust property).



Local resident Ray Camlin inspects the damage outside his property. Photo courtesy Sevenoaks Chronicle.



The wooden planter placed in front of Quebec Cottages for protection

3. Junction the Green and Vicarage Hill (Yew Tree Cottage)

There is virtually no pavement by Yew Tree Cottage and vehicles pass very close to this old listed building. In late October 2015 a Supermarket delivery van collided with the building while passing another vehicle at this pinch-point in the road, causing damage to the porch-level roof, guttering and tile-hung wall.



See close-up insert for detail of roof damage

4. London Road junction

The London Rd junction (A233 to Bromley) with the A25 arguably suffers the worst traffic pollution in Westerham, being a T-junction on a hill between high-sided buildings. The road width is 2.5m per carriageway - well below the specified 3.65m per carriageway. There is no pavement on the west side of the A233 where a Grade II listed building abuts the carriageway at the corner with the A25. The east-side has a narrow pavement fronted by another Grade II listed property.



A lorry crosses the white-line to turn into the London Road



The bus from Bromley moves out and crosses the white line to clear the pavement on its turn eastwards to join the A25

5. Croydon Road Junction

The Croydon Road Junction (B2024) normally gives good visibility in both directions, until a large vehicle is turning when visibility is significantly reduced. This is a ninety-degree junction both east and west and high sided vehicles block both carriageways when turning from the B2024 as the junction is just too tight.



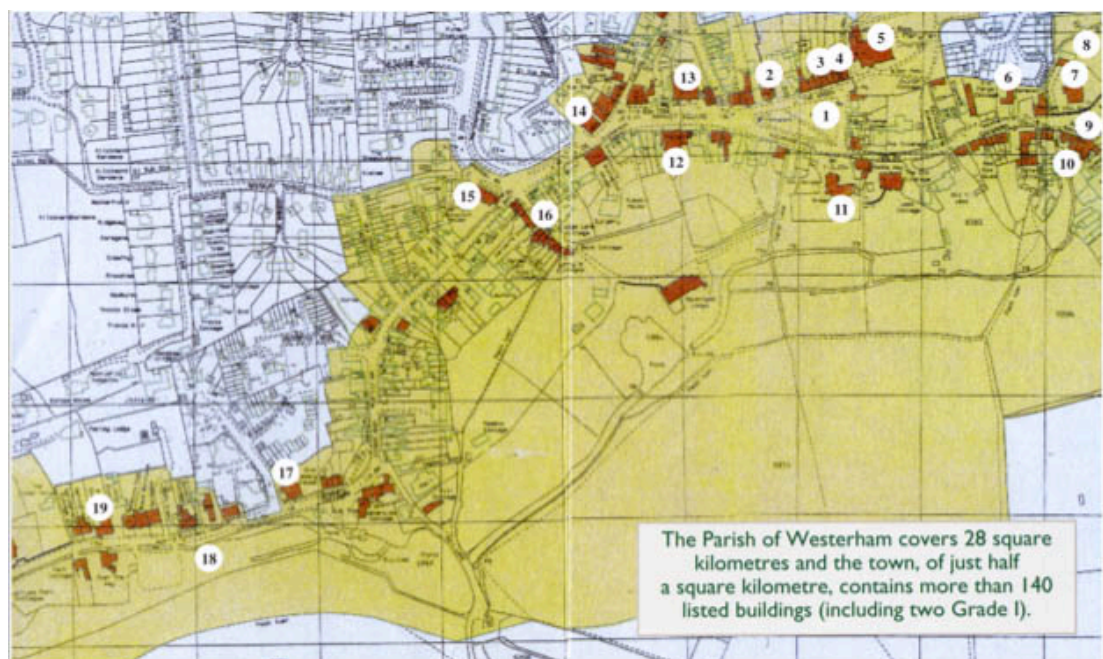
It should be noted that both the Croydon and London Roads are used by existing HGV, LGV and LCV traffic travelling to and from south London, Croydon and Bromley. Existing volume of vehicles already has difficulty accessing the A25 through Westerham, using either the A233 or B2024 as shown in the photo above.

Listed Buildings

There are over 140 listed buildings in the parish of Westerham, many of which have little or no foundations. Existing traffic is already having an adverse impact on the setting of our listed buildings

The setting of our buildings is *'influenced by environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each'*.

source - the National Planning Policy Framework



Westerham's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2014 describes the town's character and areas of special interest:

New development should look for *'...opportunities to enhance the setting of the conservation area'* and should not *'...harm its significance'*

Air Quality

All the pinch-points and junctions so far mentioned are boxed-in by tall buildings, but to date no measurements have been made at the pinch points. Emissions to the atmosphere of the exhaust from existing traffic along the A25 have already led to the centre of Westerham being declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide. Measurements have indicated that the concentration of this pollutant in Westerham have exceeded the criteria set out in the National Air Quality Strategy. The 2014 measurement in Market Square exceeds objective levels by as much as 25%: the

Direct Action (point 9) of the Air Quality Action Plan requires ***recommendations for suitable traffic-reducing proposals in the centre of Westerham*** to be made to Sevenoaks Joint Transport Board.

Nitrogen Dioxide is formed by chemical reaction in the atmosphere from Nitrous Oxide which is produced during the combustion process in a vehicle engine and is emitted in the exhaust.

There is clear evidence that Nitrogen Dioxide is harmful to health. The most common outcomes are respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath and coughing. Nitrogen Dioxide inflames the lining of the lung and reduces immunity to lung infections such as bronchitis. Studies also suggest that the health effects are more pronounced in people with asthma compared to healthy individuals.

The Committee of Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) is to publish detailed research in December 2015, adding to this evidence and the Government is required by the Supreme Court of Justice to produce a plan of action.

The Environment Audit Committee heard evidence on Diesel emissions and air quality on October 27 2015. The subject of M.O.T. Testing for Diesel Emissions was discussed and a comparison against the cost to the N.H.S. of health harm from diesel emissions and indeed the 50,000 deaths p.a. directly attributed across Britain was requested. Deliberate illegal activity from a car manufacturer gave rise to the question of 'Corporate Manslaughter'.

Clean Air in London (CAL) published (October 2015) an Opinion from Robert McCracken Q.C. which concluded ...***'where a development would cause a breach (of the Air Quality Directive 2008/50/EC) in the locality of such development planning authorities must refuse permission; where a development would either make significantly worse an existing breach or significantly delay the achievement of compliance with limit values it must be refused...'***

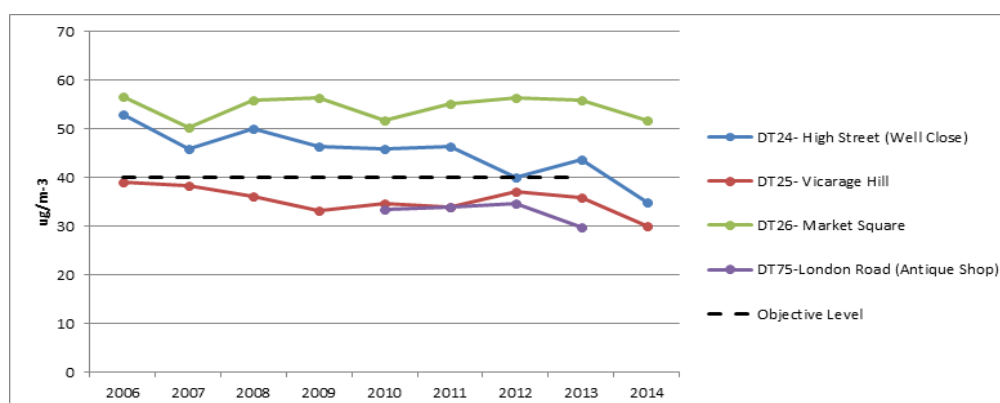
It is evident that the extra traffic resulting from the proposed development would increase the concentration of nitrogen dioxide as well as of other pollutants not only because of the increased number of vehicle movements but also because of the inevitability of more frequent traffic jams. Sevenoaks District Council would be unable to fulfil its existing legal obligation to take action to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations in Westerham.

An analysis of the presence of local schoolchildren, standing on the roadside during peak traffic times, waiting for buses, exposed in Westerham's AQMA, during the period July 2013 to July 2015, has been produced, and will continue to be updated.

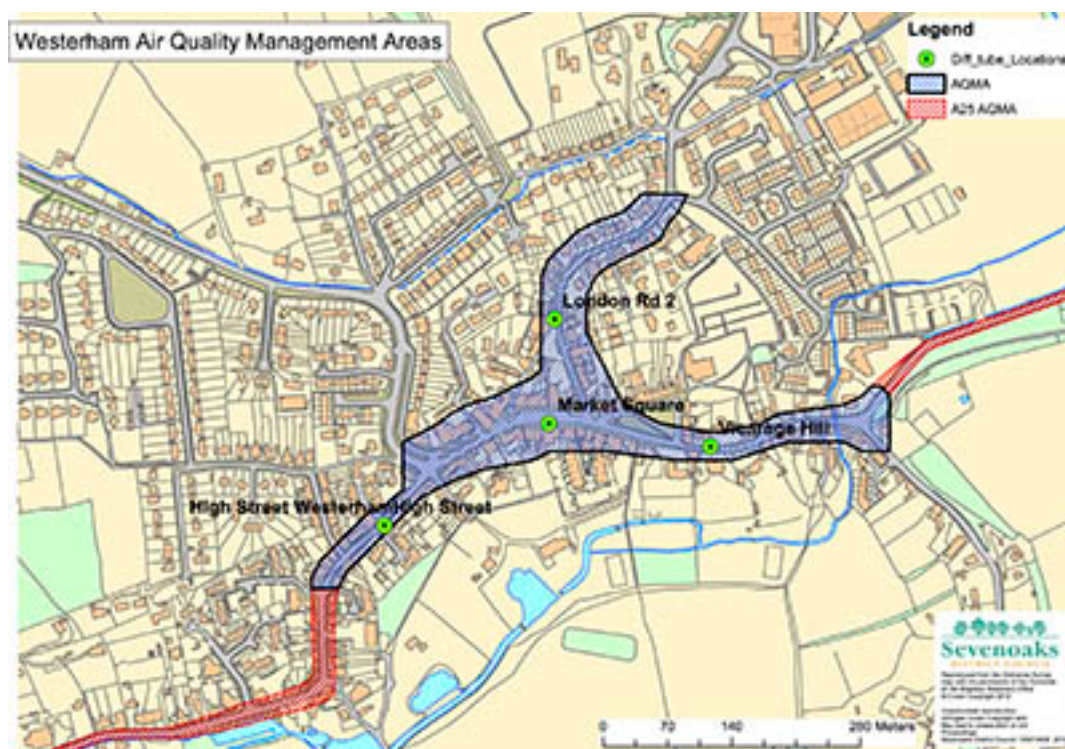
Nitrogen Dioxide annual objective

Site Number	Site Location	All results in ug/m-3		NO2 annual objective 40ug/m-3						
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
24	DT24- High Street (Well Close)	52.9	45.9	50	46.5	46	46.5	40.1	43.8	35
25	DT25- Vicarage Hill	39.1	38.3	36.1	33.2	34.8	33.9	37.1	35.8	30.1
36	DT26- Market Square	56.7	50.2	55.8	56.5	51.8	55.2	56.5	55.8	51.7
75	DT75-London Road (Antique Shop)					33.5	34	34.6	29.7	
	Objective Level	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	

Pollution levels at nominated positions in Westerham



Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Westerham



Pollution Damage to Listed Buildings

Brickwork and ragstone base-work on several old properties shows significant deterioration and erosion caused by sulphur-laden pollutants splashed on the brickwork by close-passing traffic in wet weather.



Yew Tree Cottage, Vicarage Hill, A25

Sustaining the town in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Westerham is in the heart of an AONB and hosts two significant SSSI. The projected increase in LCV and other regular traffic would be severely damaging to our environment in the impact on houses, the community and the wider Kent AONB. The National Planning Policy Framework directs that development should be restricted in an area of AONB with the presumption of sustainable development being a 'golden-thread' running through decision taking. In short, increased traffic flow would undermine the sustainability of Westerham's character, community and infrastructure.



Economic Development, Café culture and the Green road frontage

The economy of the town is highly dependent on the **Café culture** which is actively marketed by the Town Partnership as a tourist attraction. The A25 is fronted by the town's famous 'Green' and the statues of General Wolfe (1911) and Winston Churchill (1969). The earliest photo-postcards promoting this spot as 'somewhere to visit' date from 1865.

There is a link between traffic and levels of social interaction on the street. A study from University West of England concluded *'higher levels of motor vehicle traffic were found to have a considerable negative impact on the social and physical environment...'* and *'...it was significant that residents identified numerous impacts on the practical quality of life within the medium and higher level traffic streets'*

source - uwe.ac.uk/15513/1/WTPP Jan 2001

The town's economic and development strategy has been planned in conjunction with the National Trust at Chartwell and the projected Westerham Valley Farm development. Westerham town centre will be promoted as a destination accompanied by a walking heritage trail supported by smart-phone technology. Increased A25 traffic flow will have a devastating effect on Westerham's future economy





The A25 runs alongside the Green from London Road A233 junction to the pinch-point at Yew Tree Cottage, top of Vicarage Hill. Community events held here are often spoilt by the proximity of heavy traffic on this busy road

Fragility of Westerham's road system

Local side-roads were constructed in the era of the horse and cart and are all very narrow. Very few houses in these side-roads have off-street parking or a garage yet home owners today invariably have two or more cars per household.

The M25 between junctions 5 and 6 which are directly north and either-side of the town is considered to be one of the UK motorway system's worst accident 'black-spot' areas. Any diversions necessary are routed via the A25 through Westerham town centre. Any incident at all leads to chaos in the town. To quote the Westerham Village Design Statement, 2001 - *'a hiccup on the motorway equals a thrombosis in the town'*.

On September 21 2015, a fire in an old property near the pinch-point at the Croydon Road junction resulted in road-closure for five days. Drivers of HGVs and LCVs persisted in attempting to use back-roads to the alarm of local residents





After the fire was extinguished, the roof was deemed unsafe and the building in danger of collapse. Scaffolding erected to support the building was deemed so close to the road it could be hit by passing vehicles. Vehicles regularly mount the pavement at this point in order to pass. After five days the road was reopened for one-way traffic with temporary traffic lights until the building was repaired (this took several weeks).



Late 2015 and early 2016 Westerham suffered two traffic related deaths and one severe injury - evidence of danger on Westerham's roads at existing volumes of traffic.

Stay Safe And Keep In Touch:

www.visitwesterham.org.uk website

Facebook Page Westerham Kent

Twitter @visit_westerham or @westerhambiz