

STATEMENT TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PETITION:

Say No To Cheriton Cycle Lanes.

Signatures 3,269

I started County Hardware from an empty shop with my wife and young family back in 1997, and together we created a successful independent business. Over time however we have faced many challenges and seen trade drop off significantly from its heyday.

While Cheriton has seen the rise in the likes of The Range (which has affected us and other traders massively), and numerous Sheds keep popping up on Park Farm with their FREE large car parks, Cheriton has lost banks, greengrocers, bakers, clothes shops... And that's before we mention the dreaded word AMAZON.

If cycle lanes come into Cheriton and with it the loss of parking, County Hardware will be added to that 'Closed Down' list, along with many other independent traders as we would be unable to survive. We sell heavy and bulky goods that won't go on a bike. We serve many old people who can't ride a bike, and we don't only serve the people of Cheriton, but also the people of the Marsh, Elham, Stelling Minis, Dover, Newington etc...

But this Proposal is not only unpopular with the traders; it is also very unpopular with local residents. The response we received when we started our petition took us by surprise, as we were inundated with folks coming into our shop to sign the petition and to moan about the scheme. Councillor Rory Love and Dylan Jeffrey attended two crowded public meetings (arranged by Cllr Jeffrey), so will know only too well the strength of feeling and anger at the proposal.

Since Covid, Cheriton has seen a rise in footfall as customers near and far feel safer shopping in smaller independent stores. And so now Cheriton has very few empty shops, unlike Folkestone with its disastrous Pedestrianisation scheme. Just look at Sandgate Road where you can drive along and park, then compare it to the pedestrianised stretch of Sandgate Rd and Guildhall St.

Cheriton is a friendly community driven, secondary High St, where shopkeepers and staff have time to talk with their customers, and be on first name terms with many. Cycle lanes would destroy all this and will only lead to empty shops, more takeaways, graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

Yours in good faith

John Baker

County Hardware