

Public Conveniences Review

Consultation

The consultation asked six questions and aimed to capture opinion on usage, importance and which locations should be closed. The consultation went live on Monday 17th January and ran for 6 weeks through to Sunday 27 February 2022 and received 2016 replies.

The rankings provided under questions 2 - 5 show the least popularity toilets when related to the question asked.

Question 1: Are you completing this consultation as a resident of Guildford Borough, visitor to Guildford Borough, or on behalf of an organisation (such as a parish council, charity, or community group)?

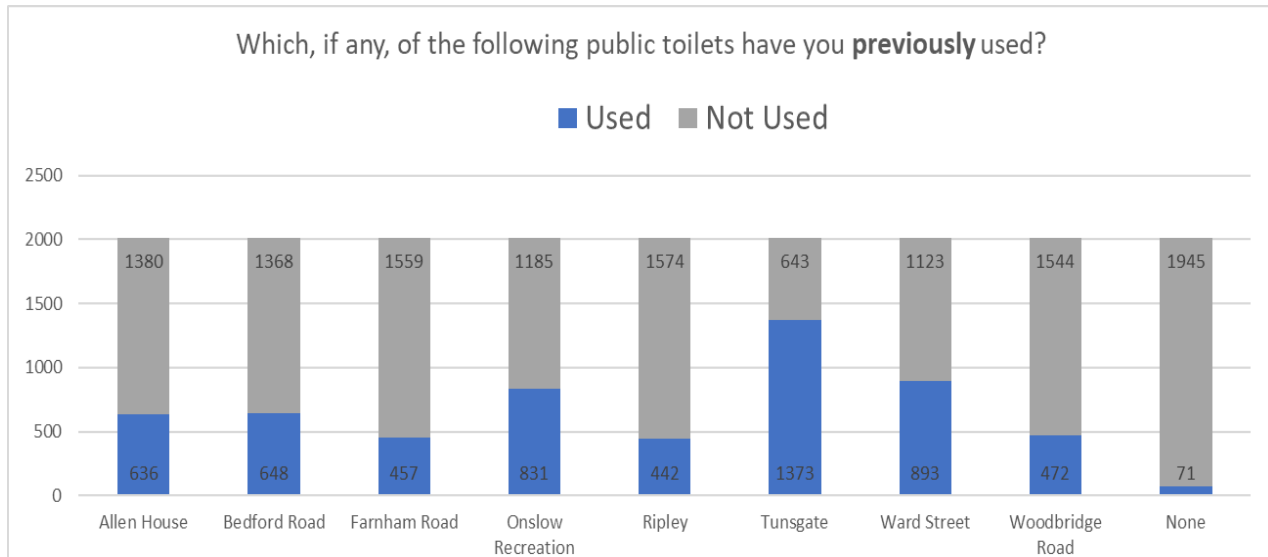
1,941 total respondents:

- 36 on behalf of an organisation
- 1,736 residents of Guildford borough
- 169 visitors to Guildford borough

As expected, the vast majority of responses (89% of those that picked a core option) were given by residents of the borough. There were a further 75 responses that chose 'other' and largely detailed they were residents of neighbouring Councils and/or work in Guildford Borough. Other responses include variations of the 3 core choices, 'GBC staff' (1), market traders (2) and street angels (4).

Question 2: Which, if any, of the following public toilets have you previously used?

The following bar chart shows what respondents selected as the toilets they had previously used. The data shows that the majority of respondents said they had previously used Tunsgate toilets (68%), compared to all other locations where the majority said they had not previously used them. The least previously used was Ripley at 22%.



Public toilet location	Used	Not used
Allen House	636	1380
Bedford Road	648	1368
Farnham Road	457	1559
Onslow Recreation Ground	831	1185
Ripley	442	1574
Tunsgate	1373	643
Ward Street	893	1123
Woodbridge Road	472	1544
None	71	1945

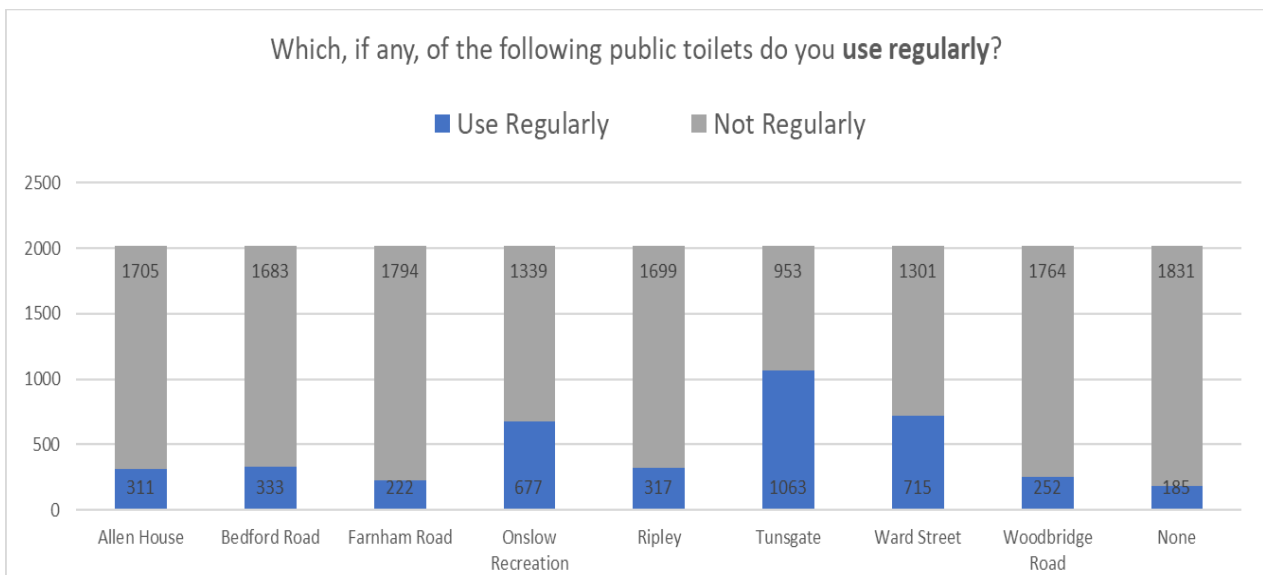
In ranked order, the four toilets (as it includes Ripley) with the lowest previous usage are:

1. Ripley
2. Farnham Road
3. Woodbridge Road
4. Allen House

To note, Bedford Road is only 12 previously used responses behind Allen House. The next nearest is Onslow but it has a much larger gap of 183.

Question 3: Which, if any, of the following public toilets do you use regularly?

The following bar chart shows what respondents selected as the toilets they most regularly used. The data shows that the majority of respondents said they regularly used Tunsgate toilets (53%), compared to all other locations where the majority said they did not regularly use them. The least regularly used was Ripley.



Public toilet location	Used Regularly	Not Regularly used
Allen House	311	1705
Bedford Road	333	1683
Farnham Road	222	1794
Onslow Recreation Ground	677	1339
Ripley	317	1699
Tunsgate	1063	953
Ward Street	715	1301
Woodbridge Road	252	1764
None	185	1831

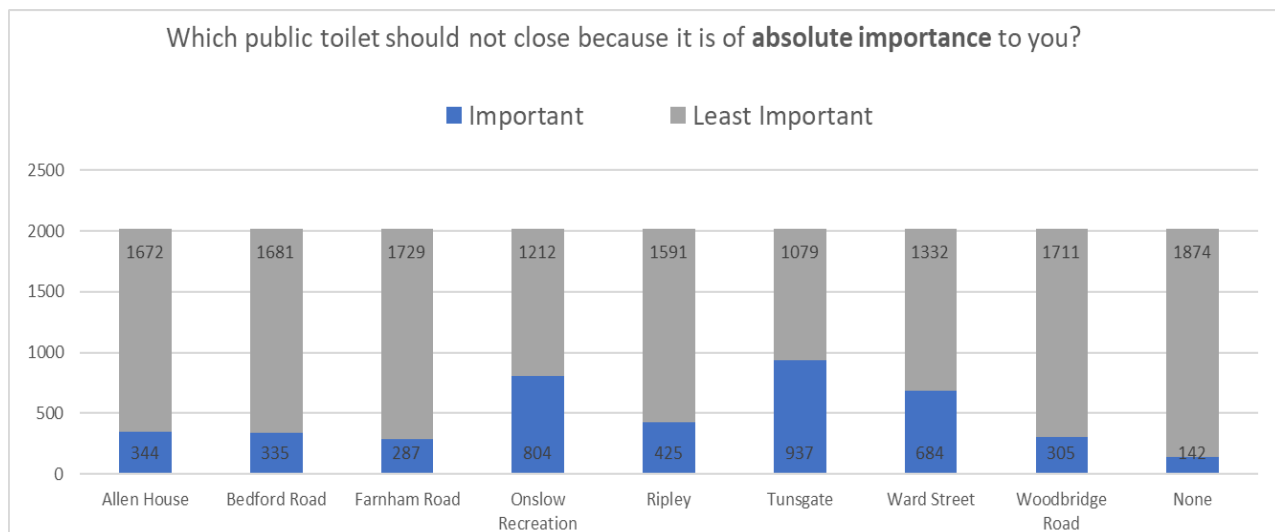
In ranked order, the 4 toilets (as it includes Ripley) with the lowest regular usage are –

1. Farnham Road
2. Woodbridge Road
3. Allen House
4. Ripley

It is noteworthy that Bedford Road is only 16 ‘regularly used’ responses behind Ripley. The next nearest is Onslow but it has a much larger gap of 287.

Question 4: Which public toilet should not close because of its absolute importance to you, any why?

The following bar chart shows what respondents selected as the toilets they felt should not close because of its absolute importance to them. The data shows that none of the toilets received more than 50%.



Public toilet location	Important	Least Important
Allen House	344	1672
Bedford Road	335	1681
Farnham Road	287	1729
Onslow Recreation Ground	804	1212
Ripley	425	1591
Tunsgate	937	1079
Ward Street	684	1332
Woodbridge Road	305	1711
None	142	1874

In ranked order, the five toilets with the lowest 'absolute importance' responses are:

1. Farnham Road
2. Woodbridge Road
3. Bedford Road
4. Allen House
5. Ripley

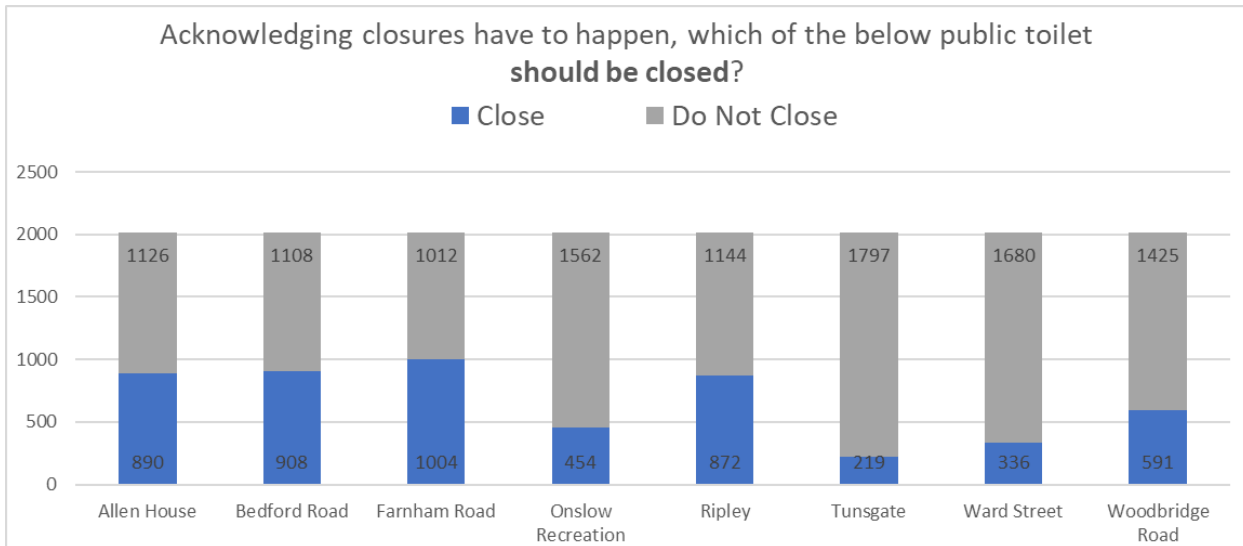
This list includes five as the four least important toilets not including Ripley. Ripley stood in 5th place being 81 responses behind Allen House. The next nearest is Ward Street but it has a much larger gap of 259.

When respondents added comments the word 'Ripley' and 'Onslow' were used 241 times and 240 time respectively. The majority of the response's references the lack or nearby alternative provisions. The word 'children', or variation of, was used 461 times largely referencing the use of the Onslow Recreation Ground, particularly concerning students at the nearby Onslow Infants School and sports in the recreation ground.

Question 5: In your opinion, acknowledging closures have to happen, which of the below public toilets should be closed and why? (Select four if Ripley is one of your options, select five if not)

This question was to gain direct feedback regarding the closure decision that had to be made.

The following bar chart shows what respondents selected as the toilet they felt should close. The data shows that none of the toilets received more than 50%.



Public toilet location	Close	Do Not Close
Allen House	890	1126
Bedford Road	908	1108
Farnham Road	1004	1012
Onslow Recreation Ground	454	1562
Ripley	872	1144
Tunsgate	219	1797
Ward Street	336	1680
Woodbridge Road	591	1425

In ranked order, the four toilets (as it includes Ripley) that should be closed in the public’s opinion are:

1. Farnham Road
2. Bedford Road
3. Allen House
4. Ripley

The next nearest is Woodbridge Road but has a larger gap of 281, compared to a total spread between Farnham Road and Ripley of only 132.

It is noteworthy that Farnham Road is the only toilet to receive selection by nearly 50% of respondents – 49.8%.

Question 6: Please tell us why you have chosen those public toilets.

We have been aware throughout that the closure of public toilets is not a popular activity to undertake. The responses largely voiced that they didn't want any toilets to close, and some respondents did refuse to answer question five, fully or partially:

- "I think you need to keep good coverage of facilities but can't say which should close as am likely to just tick the ones that I don't personally use which isn't fair."
- "They shouldn't be closed. In terms of public budgets £50000 is a trivial sum of money."

The word "town" appeared in the responses 225 times and voiced opinions like –

- "There are other toilets in the town centre"
- "I'd rather none but if it has to happen then car parks are close to the town centre, Woodbridge road is a fair distance away from the busy town, and Ripley is better as 4 compared to 5"

The word 'Ripley' appeared in the responses 195 times and comments were largely in opposition to them closing:

- "There are facilities very close to all of these options. There are no other options near Ripley. This is a local community and facilities are really important to maintain use."
- "there are other toilets nearby, Ripley because of high cost"
- "Ripley is vital to continue because there is no alternative. The others should be on basis of a proper analysis of alternatives by experts in the Council."
- "Ripley – lack of use..."
- "Ripley – to keep closures to 4..."
- "Ripley does not have another public toilet for use..."

The word 'nearby' appeared 157 times and 'centre' 148 times largely referencing availability of alternatives in the town and lack of alternatives in Ripley and Onslow.

The word 'none' appeared 146 times.

There were many responses, both in written letters and via the consultation, that any toilet closures will disproportionately affect disabled residents and visitors to the borough. It has already been established that we need to try and ensure nearby suitable alternatives are in place before or shortly after any closures. The toilets in the town centre already have many alternatives available provided by the Council and the private sector.

Conclusion

The officer's recommendation, and preference at consultation, was that Allen House, Bedford Road, Ripley and Woodbridge Road should be closed. Respondents were provided with the reason for closures, the footfall of those subject to consultation and the mentioned preference before answering question 5.

Onslow, Tunsgate and Ward Street all received a large number of votes in favour of maintaining their provision. The consultation's data is statistically significant enough to remove these three locations from consideration of closure.

There are five of our toilets that were consistently in the above provided ranking lists for each of the above questions. Therefore, the decision to close four including Ripley, or five excluding Ripley must come from:

- Allen House
- Bedford Road
- Farnham Road
- Ripley
- Woodbridge Road

As Ripley would be included as 1 of 5, and to minimise total closure numbers and the impact on residents, Ripley should be 1 of 4 locations chosen. Although Ripley currently has no nearby alternatives, we will be working to find alternatives via the private sectors use of the Great British Toilet Association's Use our Loos scheme.

Farnham Road appears as the 2nd least previously used, 1st in least used regularly, 1st in measure of the least important and received the highest number of votes to close, with nearly 50%. Although Farnham Road was not part of the original preference it has statistical significance in the consultation and would not be ruled out for the closure decision.

Decision

The decision was made to select the following locations for closure:

- Allen House
- Bedford Road
- Farnham Road
- Ripley

We have come to an agreement with Ripley Parish Council, who will take on the cleaning and maintenance of Ripley toilets from Monday 4 April. This means the toilet will stay open. We would like to thank Ripley Parish Council for their swift decision at an Extra-Ordinary Council meeting last week.

The last day the other three toilets will be open is Sunday 3 April. They will not be available for use on and after Monday 4 April 2022. We are working hard to determine if another organisation would like to take over the toilets to maintain a publicly accessible provision. Work to encourage businesses to allow the public to use their customer toilets, without any need to be a customer and make a purchase, will continue.