



## **OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE)**

### **PETITION – OATLANDS AVENUE, WEYBRIDGE**

**9 MARCH 2009**

#### **KEY ISSUE**

To update members on the investigations carried out, the results obtained, and the conclusions and recommendations made, following the presentation of the petition to the December meeting of this committee.

#### **SUMMARY**

This report updates members subsequent to the presentation of the petition at the December Committee, accompanied by a verbal presentation by the lead petitioner highlighting safety concerns particularly outside Cleves School.

A report to the Committee was agreed following further investigation.

This report presents the results of those findings.

#### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Local Committee Elmbridge is asked to:

- (i) Approve the introduction of a safe crossing location immediately outside the school, centrally located between the schools in and out car park.
- (ii) Request that the school keep their car park gates closed at school arrival and departure times, in order to achieve the first recommendation.
- (iii) Request that the school provide a pedestrian gate, suitably located, to encourage the use of the safe crossing location.

- (iv) Approve the parking assessment in both Oatlands Avenue and Oatlands Chase, to be included in the annual review programme.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members are reminded that a petition was submitted to the December 2008, meeting of the Local Committee from a local group named 'CRISIS'. The petition is headed 'Cleves School Weybridge Campaign for a Safe Crossing outside the school'. The Chairman of the group addressed the meeting to highlight their particular concerns, regarding crossing of children and parents outside the school, speeding traffic, and parking.
- 1.2 Oatlands Avenue is the D3868, capable of carrying vehicles of all classes and weights. The road runs from the D3865 Oatlands Chase to the A317 Queens Road. It travels parallel to the railway line with access over the railway to the A317 directly at the Weybridge end and by way of Oatlands Chase at the Walton end, with no access from the south in between.
- 1.3 The road is subject to a 30mph speed limit and is well lit by a continuous system of street lighting. Continuous footways are provided on both sides of the road, in the immediate vicinity of the school, but continue along one side of the road beyond the school towards Weybridge.
- 1.4 School warning signs and school amber flashing lights have been provided along Oatlands Avenue, on either side of the school effectively on both approaches. A School Keep Clear carriageway marking has also been provided immediately outside the school entrance.
- 1.5 In October 2002, the Local Committee resolved to introduce a package of amended waiting restrictions in the vicinity of the school having deferred the item twice previously due to numerous objections. These measures included both at any time restrictions and limited waiting between 8.00am to 9.30am and 2.30pm to 4.00pm Monday to Friday.
- 1.6 This was carried out in an attempt to reduce parental parking immediately opposite the school, and at junctions, in order to increase safety during arrival and departure times. This caused many objections directly from the Church, residents of Oatlands Avenue, together with further residents of both private and public roads in the immediate area, due to the potential for reduced and displaced parking.
- 1.7 In March 2005, another traffic Order was agreed by the Committee cited as 'The Surrey County Council Prohibition of Stopping Outside Schools.' This order effectively made areas of School Keep Clear markings outside schools legally enforceable when previously they had been advisory and non-mandatory. The times of the order are 8.15am to 9.15am and 2.30pm to 4.00pm, Mondays to Fridays, during term times.

This order involves more than just parking as it prohibits any vehicle to stop or remain at rest on the Keep Clear Marking area.

- 1.8 A school crossing patrol (SCP) operated for this school across the B365 Ashley Road. A pedestrian refuge island was provided some years ago, specifically for the SCP, to facilitate crossing this busy B road during school arrival and departure times. The school warning signs and amber flashing lights were also erected either side of this island to warn drivers. When the SCP retired, in consultation with the school, the signs and amber flashing lights were removed and relocated to Oatlands Avenue, where they currently now reside.
- 1.9 In 2007, Surrey County Council's Elmbridge Community Travel Advisor assisted Cleves School in the production of their School Travel Plan, for which the school received a government grant of £6,805.00 in the June of that year.

## **2 ANALYSIS**

- 2.1 In the last 7 years and 10 months (1/1/2001 – 30/10/2008) there has been one slight injury accident along this section of road in the vicinity of the school. This occurred on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2008, at 15.30 and recorded by Surrey Police as involving a vehicle travelling at 18-20mph.
- 2.2 A meeting was arranged at the school a few years ago to discuss the provision of a crossing scheme in Oatlands Avenue. No accidents had occurred at that stage and hence a scheme could not be justified on benefit cost grounds, when prioritised against many other accident related sites in the Borough.
- 2.3 However it was agreed that a feasibility study could be carried out by Faber Maunsell to introduce a pedestrian crossing outside the school, and this then used to pursue a future scheme were funds to be found from an external source at a later stage. As one of the parents who attended the meeting was an employee of the aforementioned company, he agreed to attempt to carry this out.
- 2.4 Although an outline planning application to develop the south-western part of the Cleves site has now been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council, this is only outline at this stage, and does not currently presuppose any commitment by any potential developer.
- 2.5 The school currently operates a "drop-and-go" system, which allows parents to drive in and out of the school car park. Although the initiative is to be commended, the unfortunate consequence of doing so has increased the dangers immediately outside the school for parents, children, cyclists, and any through traffic.

- 2.6 The car park is located centrally off the School Keep Clear marking. As stated in paragraph 1.7, the traffic order prohibits any vehicle to stop or remain at rest on the Keep Clear Marking area. Vehicles using the drop off area are now encouraged to queue in an illegal area. This is an area which a SCP patrol could operate within. It would afford the greatest visibility and additional protection would be provided by the School Keep Clear zone
- 2.7 The consequences of encouraging vehicular traffic to drive to this area are many and in summary it is having the following side effects.
- Inviting vehicles into an area of high pedestrian activity, which should be kept clear to allow pupils to cross the road to school, and for the safe operation of a SCP.
  - Waiting vehicles obstruct through traffic, which in turn attempt to take evasive action and in appropriate risks to avoid the congestion and inherent delays.
  - Illegal parental parking opposite the school is also adding to the congestion in the area and creating a gridlock situation.
  - Pedestrians are being forced to cross between blind spots and several lanes of parked cars.
  - Cyclists are being obstructed by parked vehicles, queuing vehicles and opening car doors.
  - Parents are placing their own children at risk by sitting in queues whilst dropping off children in live traffic.
- 2.8 At the December Committee, County Councillor Mr Roy Taylor, agreed to fund a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) from his allocation, to be erected along Oatlands Avenue, on the approach from Weybridge. This is to supplement the existing signage, and additionally warn the drivers of vehicles, just prior to the bend, to the presence of the school ahead.

### 3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 The estimated cost of the requested signalised pedestrian crossing would be approximately £60,000 - £80,000. Traffic calming and additional measures would increase this figure even further and this cannot be justified in terms of benefit cost given the lack of related accident history, and the current funding levels available for schemes of this nature.
- 3.2 Signal crossings have also been found to pose added risk on lightly trafficked roads, when left unused for long periods of the day. Moreover the Department for Transport guidance sets out the possibility of drivers,

accustomed to finding the signal at green failing to stop when approaching them at red.

- 3.3 A substantial quantity of pedestrian safety barrier would also be required to chaparral pedestrians to the crossing and prevent them from effectively crossing across the measure at an inappropriate location between waiting vehicles. It would be difficult to provide this as there are driveways and side roads, which would create breaks in the barrier.
- 3.4 The school is asked to formally close its gates at school arrival and departure times and not encourage vehicles off the public highway.
- 3.5 This will allow the formalisation of a SCP location in the most central and appropriate location in vicinity of the school entrance.
- 3.6 The current parking restrictions are assessed for Oatlands Chase and Oatlands Avenue with a view to creating limited parking to prevent all day commuter parking, yet allow limited parental parking at school times. This will be carried out as a separate exercise as it will require statutory consultation. This would also have the added benefit of addressing the commuter parking issue, which was identified in the school travel plan.
- 3.7 Whilst a school crossing patrol remains the most suitable solution, an appropriate crossing location outside the school can be accommodated which would maximise safety for both parents and children and can also then serve to assist the SCP when one is finally appointed. Minimal work is required to create the dropped kerb area, include tactile paving slabs, and the erection of limited pedestrian safety rails.
- 3.8 A pedestrian opening in the schools current vehicular gate, or the introduction of a new pedestrian only side gate, erected between the hedge and the vehicular gate, would afford the school the opportunity to allow pedestrian access to the schools internal pedestrian paths. The small costs of carrying out this work could be funded from the School Travel Plan grant, if this has not yet been spent.
- 3.9 The school could in future consider a change to the job description of the caretaker to act as the SCP as this is the situation in some other schools, including Oatlands Infants School in neighbouring St Mary's Road.
- 3.10 The School Travel Advisor will be writing to all Surrey schools at the beginning of the summer term with details of the road safety and sustainable travel services on offer. Cleves School may wish to utilise the services offered in order to improve road safety at the school.

#### **4 CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 None

## **5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This is an election year and Member funds for 2009/10 cannot be allocated until July 2009. The estimated cost of the proposal is £3500, which County Councillor Mr Roy Taylor has at this juncture agreed to fund from his next year's allocation if elected as a County Councillor. If Members were minded this could also be funded from the Committee's capital allocation again to be decided in July.

This funding is not guaranteed and is subject to the support of the divisional County Councillor and subsequent Local Committee approval at the July meeting.

## **6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None

## **7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Not applicable.

## **8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The report recommends improvements to the parking regime in the immediate area together with the creation of a safe crossing location outside the school, to afford both parents and children increased confidence and visibility when crossing the road. This can only be achieved with the cessation of the use of the school car park as a drop off area. A pedestrian gate would also be required on school property, to allow access to the internal school paths directly from the crossing point.

## **9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The proposal would improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking, by creating greater confidence and a safer environment.

## **10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

- 10.1 If the Committee approve the recommendations and agree the improvements, the waiting restrictions would be included in the next amendment order, which is likely to be made in the autumn of this year. The dropped crossing and tactile paving necessary for the formal crossing point together with some limited pedestrian safety rails would be phased to coincide with the traffic order implementation, subject to the committee agreeing the Member expenditure in July.
- 10.2 Surrey County Council will continue to monitor the road and liaise with the school through the Community Travel Advisor.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

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