



WOODBRIIDGE ROAD BUS LANE

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)

9th FEBRUARY 2006

KEY ISSUE

This report sets out details of two objections received following advertisement of the traffic orders for the above scheme, and considers options to overcome these.

SUMMARY

The report sets out the strategy behind the bus lanes, and details of those implemented to date. It sets out details of the objections received, together with officer comments. The highway layout is described, and a total of eight options to overcome the objections are set out with the advantages and disadvantages of each. The report concludes that the disadvantages in each case are such that the scheme should progress as planned, and this is recommended to the Committee.

Report by

SENIOR LOCAL TRANSPORTATION
MANAGER

Surrey Atlas Ref.

Page 109, C1 - D1
Page 130, C8 – D8

GUILDFORD B.C. WARD(S)

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COUNTY ELECTORAL DIVISION(S)

GUILDFORD SOUTHWEST

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to agree:

- (i) that the objections raised to the proposed bus lanes be over-ruled, that the project should progress as originally planned and that the objectors be informed accordingly.

THE GUILDFORD TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- 1 The Guildford bus lanes are one of the principal strands of the Committee's transport strategy for Guildford, complementing other forms of bus priority and the provision of Park and Ride sites. This strategy is designed to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of Guildford as a centre of economic activity, bringing people into the town centre to work, shop and take their leisure, while seeking to reduce congestion.
- 2 Five bus lanes were approved for implementation by the former Guildford Partnership Area Transportation Sub-Committee in 2000. Three, on Woking Road, Parkway and Onslow Street, have been completed. The fourth, Woodbridge Road was partly completed last year, from Ladymead to the rail bridge. The second phase, from the rail bridge south to the York Road roundabout, is the subject of this report. It is hoped that the fifth, on Millbrook, will proceed during the next financial year.
- 3 Bus lanes are important to reduce the effect that traffic congestion has on bus services. Traffic commissioners have the power to fine bus operators for failure to adhere to their timetables, even where the reasons for such failure are outside the control of the operators themselves. Such fines result in the services becoming uneconomic, and the delays themselves are discouraging to passengers. Arriva were fined £23,000 in July 2004 for delays on the 34/35 route between Guildford and Camberley.
- 4 For the above reasons, the greater the length and continuity of the bus lanes, the greater the positive effect on bus punctuality.

BUS LANES ALREADY IMPLEMENTED

- 5 The Woking Road bus lane operates from 7.00 to 10.00 am and again from 4.00 to 7.00 pm. The Parkway lane operates between 7.00 am and 7.00 pm without a break. The same applies to the Onslow Street and Woodbridge Road phase 1, but these lanes are also available for use by heavy goods vehicles. This flexible approach has been adopted to minimise objections to the traffic orders. The second phase of the Woodbridge Road lane was intended to operate in the same way as the first. There is a longer-term aspiration to harmonise the timings of all the bus lanes to simplify understanding and make enforcement easier.
- 6 The Woking Road bus lane is continuous between Stoughton Road and Stoke crossroads with the exception of four breaks at junctions. The Parkway bus lane runs continuously from Spectrum to Stoke crossroads. The Onslow Street lane is relatively short in length, and runs continuously

from the Woodbridge Road junction to the gyratory traffic signals.

- 7 Some 190 metres south of the area in question, Woodbridge Road meets York Road at a roundabout. One of the approved highway improvements associated with the Friary redevelopment will see this replaced with traffic signals. These will be consistent with most other major junctions in the town centre, allowing more effective electronic linking of signal timings to the benefit of the network as a whole. It will also improve safety for cyclists and allow at-grade crossing by pedestrians, avoiding the difficulties associated with subways. The installation of traffic signals at this junction will, together with increased traffic flows on York Road, almost certainly result in longer traffic queues than are experienced at the current roundabout.

PREVIOUS REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

- 8 Members may recall that Mr. Lee Anderton of Anderton's music shop presented a written question to and addressed the Committee at its meeting on 26 May 2005. He sought the construction of a lay-by outside his premises. The salient parts of the question read as follows:

"I run a retail business, Anderton's Music Co, which has a £6 million turnover and employs over 30 people from a site on the Woodbridge Road. The bus lane proposals would remove current customer access to the site by taking away parking but most important of all, it will prevent us from receiving deliveries to the site; causing huge damage to our business and putting many of our employee's livelihoods at stake.

Allen Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation has been established 20 years in the adjacent property. Many of its disabled and injured patients would have difficulty, and increased personal risk, if they cannot have continued access/parking, directly outside the premises. Surely this has been overlooked when carrying out the safety audit.

There is a simple solution; but it will cost SCC. In order that the bus lane can proceed & we retain suitable access a delivery lay-by and drop off point can be created. The pathway along this section of Woodbridge Rd is over 5m wide – easily big enough for a lay-by & pavement. Whilst SCC is at last looking into the cost of this, we can almost hear the answer coming back "sorry it is too expensive". We no longer want to hear about how this is part of a phased development of bus lanes; We want to hear how we are supposed to run our businesses when you want to take away the ability to access them."

- 9 The answer prepared by officers assured the Committee that the informal consultation process had been properly carried out, that the proposal would be formally advertised providing a further opportunity for objections to be lodged, and promised that a report would be brought to Committee in the event that any objections could not be satisfactorily resolved.
- 10 Mr. Anderton has also written at various times to several Members of the Committee, to the County Council's Chief Executive, to Tim Downing, Chairman of the Town Centre Management Group, and to Anne Milton MP seeking support for his views.

DETAILS OF THE FORMAL OBJECTIONS

- 11 Traffic Orders for the second phase of the Woodbridge Road bus lane were formally advertised between 30 September and 27 October 2005. Two formal objections were received on 24 and 26 October respectively, from Mr. Anderton and Mr Allen.
- 12 Mr Anderton's objection reads as follows: "Andertons Music Co is reliant on vehicles being able to load / unload directly outside the store at all times of day. The removal of this facility (which we have enjoyed since buying this premises in 1991) would be incredibly damaging to our business. I would like to remind you that Andertons has been established in Guildford since 1964, employs over 30 people locally, was the co-founder of the ACM (Europe's largest rock & pop school), and is an integral part of Guildford's economic & cultural community. I know I have the support of Guildford's MP & many members of the council, so I would hope that, before the bus lane plans go any further, we can come to an agreeable compromise on the plans (e.g. the lay-by).
- 13 Mr. Allen's objection reads: "We are very concerned that our patients are going to be put at risk, and therefore formally object to the bus lane."
- 14 Officers met with Messrs. Allen and Anderton on 28 November and reviewed all of the possible solutions which might overcome the objections. The meeting was positive and helpful and both objectors promised to consider the various options. Officers undertook to obtain estimates of the cost of constructing a lay-by. Despite this a further e-mail was received from Mr Anderton on 6 December requesting that the objections should stand. The message read as follows: "*Many thanks for coming to visit John Allen & I to discuss our objections to the Woodbridge Rd bus lane. After further discussions with John, we have decided not to withdraw our objections to the bus lane until such a time as the committee have had the opportunity to discuss the viability of either building a lay-by or shortening the bus lane to leave the existing parking in place. Your offer of a dropped kerb & restricted loading times is one that neither John or I feel will suitably remove the negative impact that the bus lane will have on our businesses (& in Johns case his patient safety) & therefore we see the dropped kerb offer as a final alternative should the committee reject the other two proposals. I'm sorry that we couldn't come to an agreement, and I'm very grateful that we had the opportunity to discuss things face to face.*"

OFFICER COMMENTS ON THE OBJECTIONS

- 15 Mr Anderton has offered to provide details of the deliveries to his premises, but these have not yet been received. It is not disputed that a business of the size and turnover of Andertons must receive many deliveries, but casual observation by officers has not suggested that many heavy goods vehicle deliveries are involved. It is likely that the majority of deliveries are small packets or parcels delivered in light goods vehicles. These do not need to park immediately outside the premises, although the private spaces outside the two shops (see paragraph 21 below) could be

controlled and utilised by the businesses for this purpose. Clearly a minority of deliveries involve heavy instruments which could not be carried a long distance.

- 16 A great many businesses in Guildford (and other town centres) are restricted in the times when they may receive deliveries. The most obvious examples of this are the shops in the pedestrianised High Street. Both deliveries to the shops and taking away of goods by customers has to be managed without vehicular access during certain times of the day.
- 17 Andertons business is clearly successful, and is important to Guildford. A significant part of their turnover is the ordering of sheet music and other goods by internet and mail order. This activity is not well suited to taking place on a main radial route into a town centre.
- 18 Andertons and Allens have informed officers that the parking spaces on their private forecourt are reserved for customers and deliveries. Casual observation by officers suggests, however, that the same vehicles are parked in these spaces repeatedly throughout the day.

HIGHWAY LAYOUT

- 19 Plans and photographs of the affected area will be on display at the meeting of the Committee.
- 20 Outside the Anderton and Allen premises, the footway is wide, tapering from 4 to 5 metres. Immediately to the north outside the public house the footway is 2.0 metres wide. On the wide section of footway are located a lamp column, a BT phone box and one of the town centre car park variable message signs.
- 21 Behind the wide footway is a substantial private forecourt which is presumably in the ownership of the frontagers. This allows two cars to be parked outside Allens' premises, and four outside Andertons. These forecourts are accessed by driving over the footway. These crossovers are currently illegal, since no formal application has been made to the highway authority for them. The construction of the footway has not been properly designed and constructed for the purpose. Since Woodbridge Road is a principal road (A322) such a crossover also requires planning permission which has not been sought. Nevertheless the unapproved crossover has been in place and in use for many years.
- 22 On the southbound carriageway there are currently parking bays allowing parking for 2 hours or permit holders (Zone A) , but it has already been agreed that these be altered to single yellow lines (without loading restrictions) and the notices to this effect are already displayed on lamp columns in the vicinity.
- 23 Inspection of the footway revealed several manhole covers suggesting the presence of utilities' plant. Officers therefore organised the excavation of trial holes to reveal details of the positions and depths of these services.

These were measured and photographed. The utilities were then contacted to obtain their estimates for the diversion or protection of their equipment.

- 24 The standard request to the utilities at this stage of a project is a “C3” estimate; this is only a indicative estimate. No charge is made for these, but their accuracy is not guaranteed and the prices quoted are not binding. Experience shows that the estimates received are almost always substantially exceeded in practice. An alternative would have been to request a “C4” quotation but the utilities would charge for these, usually some £2000 per utility, and the estimates provided are still not binding.
- 25 The estimates for the diversion or protection of the equipment on or under the footway are as follows:

➤	BT	£24,000	(cable diversion)
➤	BT	£ 7,000	(phone box)
➤	Gas	£10,000	
➤	Water	nil	
➤	NTL	nil	
➤	EDF	£ 8,000	
➤	Car park VMS sign	£ 5,000	
➤	<u>Lamp column</u>	<u>£ 1,000</u>	
➤	Total	<u>£55,000</u>	

Given past experience, officer advice is that it would be prudent to allow a sum of £80,000 to be sure of covering these costs without incurring an overspend.

OPTIONS TO OVERCOME THE OBJECTIONS

- 26 There are a number of options which might overcome the objections, or the principles behind these. These are set out, together with the pros and cons in each case.

(a) Abandon the scheme

- 27 This would overcome the objections, but would be a major loss to the Guildford Transportation Strategy, with the loss of benefit to bus journey times on a major route into the town centre and the new bus station. The existing bus routes in Woking Road, The Parkway and the northern end of Woodbridge Road all converge on this point, while the Onslow Street bus lane is its logical continuation. The investment already made in phase 1 of the Woodbridge Road bus lane by the County Council would have been largely wasted, as would the contributions made by the developers of the Queen Elizabeth Park and Electricity Board sites. These developers may even have a reasonable claim for the refunding of their contributions if the highway authority fails to deliver what was agreed.

**(b) Truncate the bus lane outside no. 54 Woodbridge Road
(north of Drummond Road)**

- 28 This too, would overcome the objections and would retain a substantial length of the proposed bus lane, although the disadvantages of option (a) would still partly apply to this option. The loss of the southernmost section of the bus lane would be potentially damaging, particularly in the light of the conversion of the York Road roundabout to traffic signals.

**(c) Discontinue the bus lane outside no. 54 Woodbridge Road,
and recommence it outside no. 61 Woodbridge Road**

- 29 This option would partially overcome the disadvantages of option (b), but would still leave a bus lane with discontinuities. It is acknowledged that the proposed bus lane is not completely continuous, due to unavoidable obstacles such as the rail bridge. Nevertheless the greater the continuity, the greater the beneficial effect on bus journey times and reliability. HGVs parked outside Andertons premises would obstruct buses using the nearside lane, forcing them into the lane for normal traffic.

(d) Alter the period of operation of the entire bus lane to peak hours only

- 30 This would see the bus lane marked as originally intended, but it would only be operational between 7.00 and 10.00 am and 4.00 and 7.00 pm. During the off-peak period, vehicles could legally stop to load and unload outside the premises in question (and elsewhere). Andertons and other businesses along the route would need to organise their deliveries to take place at appropriate times. This would lead to inconsistency with the timings of phase 1 of the bus lane, unless its times of operation were altered to match. Inconsistency of the times of operation of the bus lane leaving the bus station with that of the Onslow Street bus lane lead to criticism about lack of clarity, and concern from Surrey Police about their inability to enforce the restrictions successfully. Interruption of the continuous operation of the bus lane by parked HGVs would force buses to move out into the normal traffic lane.

**(e) Alter the period of operation of a short section of bus lane
outside the two businesses to peak hours only**

- 31 The same comments apply to this option, but the confusion would be potentially greater as the change in times of operation would only apply to a very short section of the bus lane. It would be likely to lead to complaints from the public about perceived misuse of the bus lane.

(f) Provide a lay-by for servicing vehicles only

- 32 This is the option favoured by Messrs Anderton and Allen. It is feasible in engineering terms, but given the estimated utilities' costs set out in paragraph 25, together with the cost of the civil engineering works involved, this option would increase the cost of the bus lane by some £120,000.

(g) Provide a dropped kerb along the frontage of the two businesses

- 33 This option would effectively legalise the existing situation. It would require strengthening of the footway and possibly some utilities' diversions or protection. In theory since this would be solely to the benefit of the businesses, this option ought to be applied for and paid for by Andertons and Allens. In practice, given the bus lane works going on in any case, some cost sharing arrangement could perhaps be agreed. This would be subject to the grant of planning permission, which might delay the contract. Mr. Anderton has rejected this option.

CONSULTATIONS

- 34 The objections set out in this report have come about as part of a process of consultation, both formal and informal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 35 Option (a) would effectively abandon the scheme with a corresponding saving to the LTP Capital budget. Such an underspend so late in the financial year would be impossible to reallocate and may be difficult to carry forward into 2006/07 for other purposes.
- 36 The costs of options (b), (c), (d) and (e) would not differ significantly from the approved scheme since they would largely be achieved by alterations to the traffic order giving effect to the bus lane.
- 37 The cost of option (f) would increase the total cost by some £120,000 as set out above.
- 38 The cost of option (g) would be less than that of option (f), at perhaps £50,000. There may be scope for this to be shared with the frontagers given their current illegal crossing of the footway, albeit a practice which is well established.
- 39 The bus lanes are funded centrally by the SCC Executive as Intermediate Schemes. Minor cost variations are always to be expected and can be absorbed, but major increases cannot. It may be necessary to approach the Executive for additional funding. Alternatively the Local Committee could agree to fund additional costs from devolved LTP funding, at the expense of other projects, although this would require a significant part of the programme for next year to be deferred.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 40 The complex and difficult decision required by this report are an example of the difficulty of achieving sustainable development, a concept which encompasses environmental sensitivity together with a concern for the local economy. The Guildford Transport Strategy is designed to

encourage the use of public transport to the benefit of Guildford’s environment, reducing congestion and pollution. At the same time it is designed to bring more people into the town centre to shop, work or for other purposes, to the benefit of the local economy. In this case this aspiration conflicts with the particular needs of two businesses which may be adversely affected.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 41 It is true that the two businesses concerned have enjoyed loading facilities to date. However the highway does not exist to provide private facilities for specific premises, and many retail companies and others enjoy no such facilities. It is also the case that many shops and other commercial premises cannot receive deliveries at certain times of day (for example those in Guildford High Street).
- 42 The bus lanes are intended to maintain and enhance Guildford’s accessibility without increasing traffic congestion, thereby protecting and enhancing Guildford’s economy. Where an objection is received to such a proposal, the effect of the objection and/or the cost of mitigating it must be considered against the overall benefit and cost of the proposal.
- 43 Whatever decision is reached it must be clear that no loading facilities on the public highway can be reserved for the use of specific businesses. Should these be used by other local businesses, Messrs Anderton and Allen would have no redress.
- 44 Options (a), (b) and (c) would all have serious disadvantage to bus priority and therefore to bus journey times and reliability. For this reason they cannot be recommended. Options (d) and (e) would be likely to cause confusion and weaken our ability to enforce the bus lanes. For this reason they, too cannot be recommended. Option (f) is feasible but expensive. Officers’ advice is that expenditure on this scale to benefit two businesses cannot be justified and would establish a difficult precedent. Option (g) is workable, but has been rejected by Mr. Anderton.
- 45 In view of this, it is with regret that officers feel that the only option is to continue as planned and to over-rule the objections. The Committee is invited to support this.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS	Letters of objection Questions to Local Committee
