

Response to Dawnay School footpath petition

**Mole Valley Local Committee
23 July 2003**

KEY ISSUE:

This report responds to the petition that was presented at the Mole Valley Local Committee meeting on 2 April 2003.

SUMMARY:

At the last meeting of this Committee, a petition was presented requesting the opening of the footpath, which runs alongside Bookham library. The footpath would act as a cut through to the medical centre and The Dawnay School. Investigations as to the feasibility of this have been ongoing under the SRTS programme and are detailed in this report. It is recommended that the scheme is progressed, subject to the necessary legal agreements being put in place and subject to funding being possible.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree

- (i) that subject to the necessary legal agreements being put in place and subject to the allocation of funding being possible from the Safe Routes to School budget, officers continue to explore the possibility of opening the Library footpath with a view to implementing the scheme.

1. INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A petition was received and presented at the last Mole Valley Local Committee, supporting the opening of a footpath, which runs along the side of Bookham Library to link the Lower Road Car Park with the new Fairfield Medical Centre and the Dawnay School. The footpath would also run alongside the church and the Scout Hut. Initial site investigations have showed that the opening of this footpath would benefit the Dawnay School and Fairfield Medical centre, as it would provide a route where pupils, parents and visitors could travel safely to their destination.
- 1.2 The Dawnay School has 310 pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. It also has a playgroup with 60 children under the age of 5. The school is situated in Great Bookham, with Lower Road to the north and the A246 to the south. Immediately adjacent to the school is the Fairfield Medical Centre. A significant number of pedestrians use the footway on Lower Road to access the Dawnay School and the Fairfield medical centre.
- 1.3 Lower Road links the villages of Bookham and Fetcham and runs East to West. The road is a two-way, single carriageway. Lower Road has a footway on the south side of the carriageway at this location, however the footway is narrow and perceived as dangerous for school children and patients visiting the Medical Centre. A number of people claim 'near misses' when using this stretch of footway.

2. ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

- 2.1 A number of sources generate pedestrian movements along the Lower Road footway. Pupils and parents travelling to and from the Dawnay School do so between the hours of 8:30 and 9:00 and 14:45 and 15:45. With the introduction of a successful parking permit scheme with Mole Valley District Council, the number of people walking from the Lower Road car park has increased. Pedestrians also access Bookham Library, the Fairfield Medical Centre, the Baptist Church and the Scout Hall along the Lower Road Footway.
- 2.2 Past investigations have been carried out to consider whether it is possible to widen the existing Lower Road Footway, however this was deemed not feasible, as this would result in narrowing the already constricted carriageway.
- 2.3 In order to open up the footpath, the fence halfway along the footpath would need to be opened. A recent development adjacent to the footpath has resulted in a covenant being enforced, which at present prevents Surrey County Council from opening up the path. The developer will currently not allow the covenant to be lifted due to fears that this will attract antisocial behaviour along the footpath. The Dawnay School caretaker has agreed to lock the gate to the footpath at the end of the day as a preventative measure.

3. WAY FORWARD

- 3.1 In order to pursue the footpath option, legal issues would need to be resolved. This would require the developer to agree to lift the covenant in order to open up the fence.
- 3.2 The Library would need to give their permission for the land adjacent to their property to be used for the footpath. Their main concern is that should the footpath be accessible at night, it would create a security risk.
- 3.3 The residents of the new development and Townshott Close would need to be consulted to gain their support for the footpath, as would the Baptist Church who has concerns about pedestrians walking through their car park. The church car park is only open at limited times of the day, which is an issue that would also need to be addressed.
- 3.4 The works involved in providing the new footpath would include opening the fence at the front of the library and providing a screen and landscaping for the housing alongside the path. At the back of the library a new fence would need to be erected.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs associated with the opening of the footpath, would be met from the Local Transport Plan Safe Routes to Schools programme for the Leatherhead implementation area. It may be necessary to stagger the cost over the financial years of 2003/2004 and 2004/2005. It is expected that the total cost of the project including the legal negotiations will amount to £10,000. However due to the works being a negotiable element of the project, it is difficult to approximate costs at this time.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The provision of the footpath would provide a safe route for pedestrians wishing to access the Dawnay School and the Fairfield Medical Centre. This would result in a significant number of people using the park and walk scheme, therefore reducing the number of cars causing congestion outside the school.

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If the gateway were to be left open at night, there is a risk that this would attract antisocial behaviour. The library also has concerns over the security of their building.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The opening of the footpath would be of benefit to the disabled and visually impaired pedestrians who would be able to access the school and the medical centre along a safer route than is currently available. The path would be a level gradient and therefore suitable for wheelchairs, however it would include the negotiation of two gates. A clear width of 2000mm allows two wheelchairs to pass one another comfortably. This should be regarded as the minimum under normal circumstances. However, this may not be possible due to physical constraints, and therefore the absolute minimum width of 1000mm may be all that can be provided. The maximum length of restricted width should be 6 metres as per DfT guidance.

CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents and children are experiencing difficulties in accessing the Dawnay School along the Lower Road Footway. It is therefore suggested that the library footpath is opened up to provide a safer route to the school and the medical centre. If found to be appropriate, the scheme would be added to the Safe Routes to Schools programme. Its progression is dependent on the covenant being released and available finances being available.

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