



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
REIGATE AND BANSTEAD**

**EPSOM DOWNS PRIMARY SCHOOL
PETITION REPORT**

2nd JUNE 2008

KEY ISSUE

To consider a petition signed by parents of children from Epsom Downs Primary School and local residents of Merland Rise.

SUMMARY

A petition has been received from Ms Sally Leach, Head Teacher of Epsom Downs Primary School signed by 382 parents and local residents with a request that pedestrian lights be installed on Merland Rise between Headley Drive and the entrance to the School. The petition is accompanied by 14 letters written by pupils of the School, citing the level and speed of traffic along Merland Rise and requesting measures to improve safety.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Reigate and Banstead) is asked to agree that:

- (i) the Surrey Highways review this site in 2010/11 in accordance with the forward programme (as approved at the 20 March 2006 Local Committee).
- (ii) in view of the high cost of a signal crossing that a more cost effective and suitable traffic management option be investigated such as placement of a kerb build out with priority awarded to southbound traffic (current cost estimate circa £20,000).

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A petition has been received from the Head Teacher of Epsom Downs Primary School, signed by 382 parents and local residents. The petition is headed "Pedestrian Crossing in Merland Rise" and reads:

"Children walking to school are in danger from speeding cars driving along Merland Rise, Police have carried out speed checks and confirm that a significant number of motorists are driving above the speed limit. A significant number of children walk to school alone and are at risk of being hit by a speeding car. Rarely do motorists stop to allow children or children with adults to cross the road. It would allow children to walk safely to school if pedestrian lights were installed between Headley Drive and the entrance to Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre. Police have spoken to local residents who support this course of action."

- 1.2 Merland Rise is a straight road with a gradual gradient linking Great Tattenhams with the Preston residential estate. In the vicinity of the school there is a high demand for parking during school arrival and departure periods, although it is largely free of parked cars outside of these times. The road lies along a bus route.
- 1.3 It is perceived that some drivers exceed the 30 mph speed limit, especially when there are no parked cars in the area, although this would be outside of school arrival/departure times and, when cars are parked outside the school, average vehicle speeds are significantly reduced.
- 1.4 At the present time there is no school crossing patrol (lollipop attendant) operating outside the school. It is understood that attempts to recruit an attendant have not, to date, been successful.
- 1.5 The County's Safer Smarter Travel Team (SSTT) has been working with the School to develop a School Travel Plan. However, due to a lack of parent participation, it has not been possible to provide on-highway road safety instruction (walking and cycling), which requires a minimum 1:3 adult/child ratio. It is understood that neither the County's SSTT nor Surrey Highways received any communication from Epsom Downs School prior to deposition of the petition (see also para 4.3).

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 A speed survey conducted in 2005 by Surrey Police confirmed average speeds to be as follows:
- 32 mph southbound
 - 33 mph northbound

The view of Surrey Police at that time was that the level of speed violation did not warrant further action.

- 2.2 An interrogation of accident data, looking back to 2005, reveals there to have been 4 recorded personal injury accidents, one involved a drunk driver and the others were the result of injudicious manoeuvring. None of the cases involved pedestrians, nor was speed cited as a factor by the Police.

Year	No. of Collisions	Severity	Cause
2005	1	Slight	Intoxicated driver
2006	2	Slight	1.Turning into junction 2.Turning out of junction
2007	0	-	
2008	1	Slight	Car reversed off verge into path of learner rider on moped. Speed not a factor. Parked cars a factor

- 2.3 Surrey Highways has developed a forward prioritised programme of improvement schemes in Reigate & Banstead, which was reported to the Local Committee on 20 March 2006. This identified Merland Rise (Merland Rise School – now Epsom Downs Primary) as a site due for review in 2010/11.
- 2.4 It is understood that this site was included due to the fact that the County's Local Transport Plan seeks to provide safe routes to schools in the County and support School Travel Plans. In addition the parked cars and the lack of a school crossing patrol at this site may also be considered a factor in its inclusion on the forward programme.
- 2.5 It should also be noted that this programme was based upon the level of forward funding for improvement schemes at that time. The Local Committee may wish to note that this level of funding has reduced as a result of a greater amount of funding being directed towards highway maintenance.
- 2.6 The Local Committee may also wish to note that a highway safety scheme is currently in progress along Great Tattenhams where measures include a speed enforcement camera and an informal pedestrian crossing at the junction of Merland Rise/Great Tattenhams. A significant number of pupils attending Epsom Downs School walk via Great Tattenhams, which carries considerably higher volumes of traffic than Merland Rise and has a history of speed related accidents.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 Taking account of the accidents, measured average speeds, current funding levels and the fact that Merland Rise was previously identified as a site for investigation, a series of options have been considered as outlined below.
- 3.2 **Non engineering solution**

Considerable benefits may be achieved through education and making pupils of the school aware of the dangers when using the highway. A member of the Surrey County Council Safer Smarter Travel Team visits the school on a regular basis and will continue to offer training and information.

3.3 Kerb Build-out

To address the issue of crossing width and parked cars during school arrival/departure times, a possible measure could be to provide a build-out immediately to the north of the school entrance and award priority to southbound drivers. Such a feature could slow vehicles and create natural breaks in the traffic, presenting pedestrians with a much narrower carriageway and opportunities to cross. The facility may also serve to encourage potential lollipop attendant recruits whose job would be considerably aided. In addition such a facility may then encourage the school to participate in on-highway road safety instruction. The current estimated cost of this option would be £20,000.

3.4 Signalised Pedestrian Crossing

The estimated cost of the requested signalised pedestrian crossing is £90,000, which would not afford value for money given the lack of related accident history. Signal crossings have also been found to pose added risk when left unused for long periods of the day and Department for Transport guidance sets out the possibility of drivers, accustomed to finding the signals at green failing to stop at the traffic signal when approaching them at red.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Surrey Police have been consulted on the petition and have made the following comments.
- 4.2 “Although there was a recent accident in Merland Rise, this did not involve pedestrians and there are no records of pedestrian accidents in the past three years. Although the road is quite busy at school times, it is quiet for the rest of the day. There is also the problem of where a signal crossing could be situated due to the number of dropped kerbs and the residential nature of the road.”
- 4.3 Surrey County Council received no communication from Epsom Downs School prior to deposition of the petition and Surrey Highways were thus unable to offer advice on what may be the most suitable solution to the problems they perceive. Following the petition a representative from Smarter Safer Travel and an engineer from Surrey Highways met with Ms Leach and the local PCSO on 29 April 2008 to discuss the issues and find agreement on the way forward. A kerb build out measure was discussed at this meeting.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current cost of a signal crossing is in the region of £90,000, however, the fact that none of the accidents which have occurred in Merland Rise in the past three years has involved pedestrians, would not justify a signal crossing at this site.
- 5.2 More effective traffic management may be achieved by the placement of a kerb build-out with priority given to southbound traffic. This type of scheme would cost in the region of £20,000.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equalities and diversity implications

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no crime and disorder implications

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The construction of a signal crossing could not be justified in Merland Rise where, although there have been accidents, none involved pedestrians or speed.
- 8.2 The more affordable kerb build-out immediately to the north of the school entrance could slow vehicles and create a natural break in the traffic, presenting pedestrians with a much narrower carriageway and opportunities to cross.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed kerb build-out could assist children crossing to Epsom Downs School and be a valuable asset to the local community by reducing the width of road to be crossed.
- 9.2 It addresses concerns expressed by staff and parents of children attending Epsom Downs School and was discussed with the Head Teacher at the meeting held on 29 April 2008.

10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 10.1 Surrey Highways have developed a forward programme to investigate safety around schools in Reigate and Banstead and it is proposed that this site will be considered in 2010/11 – see also separate report to this Local committee on future funding for highway improvements.

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