

Annex B – Correspondence with third objector

Letter of objection from third objector, a local resident, dated 30th July 2007:

Dear Mr Roberts

"PEDESTRIANISATION OF PART OF PARK STREET, CAMBERLEY DUE TO THE ATRIUM RE-DEVELOPMENT"

This letter conveys my objection to the above proposal. (I am puzzled by the term re-development: in what sense is the Atrium project a re-development as opposed to a development? Perhaps you would kindly answer that question when you acknowledge receipt of this letter.)

"Due to" implies that pedestrianization is an intrinsic part of the Atrium project. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Atrium could function perfectly well were Park St to be retained as a normal thoroughfare (preferably restored to two-way status). There is no more need for Park St to be pedestrianized on account of the Atrium than there was for eg Knoll Rd to be pedestrianized when the town hall, library, civic hall and High Cross Church were built. The case for pedestrianization should be judged solely on its merits.

My objection to the pedestrianization of Park St is not directly related to the Atrium; indeed, it pre-dates the Atrium by at least 24 years as you will see from the objection I submitted as part of the consultation on the Surrey Heath Local Plan (classification group 10E) in January 1983.

Camberley is not well off for roads. Camberley suffers from increasing traffic congestion, as was acknowledged by Surrey Heath Borough Council in a publication about parking enforcement dated 26 April 2006. The Atrium is designed to attract a large number of people from outside Camberley (a million extra vehicle movements per annum was the estimate for the previous scheme for land west of Park St and that did not include 200 flats). Closing Park St is bound to exacerbate the problem. There are no proposals to build a new road to replace Park St; none of the promised "improvements" will create new road capacity. Closing Park St will delay traffic, add to congestion and pollution, and encourage traffic entering or leaving Camberley to make more use of residential roads, reducing amenity for residents.

You claim pedestrians have problems crossing Park St. I wonder what evidence you have for that. I have lived in Camberley for over 40 years and I am very familiar with Park St, which at one time served as a mini-shopping centre in its own right, meeting all one's everyday needs. Since I retired I cross Park St most days of the week. I do not recall a single occasion (before the current disruption caused by the works services associated with the Atrium) when there was a problem crossing the road. (The dangerous bit of Park St for pedestrians is the crossing point

immediately south of the roundabout at the junction of Park St and Southwell Pk Rd/Pembroke Broadway: see separate letter.)

I am not impressed by your suggestion that pedestrianization is necessary to revitalizing Park St as a retail street. Park St functioned perfectly well as a retail street with a full range of shops catering for everyday needs in the 1950s and 1960s when it was a proper road with traffic travelling in both directions. In what sense will the "new" Park St be a retail street? Most of the units already taken will be catering establishments, not shops.

The principal objection to pedestrianization is the loss of access by ordinary motorists and cyclists and I was pleased to hear from Mr I L Haller at a meeting of the Surrey Heath Local Committee that concern expressed by objectors about loss of access would be taken very seriously and could be grounds for a public inquiry. Ordinary traffic will be unable to park in Park St and St Mary's Rd, causing severe inconvenience to people wishing to visit premises in Park St (eg those of us who need to deliver large quantities of coin to the bank). "Get on your bike" do I hear you say? Not much point in that, when one is required to get off and push.

I believe the best option for Park St is to retain it as an ordinary road, restored to two-way status. Failing that, my second choice is a fully pedestrianized road (what is proposed by the SCC being the worst of all possible worlds) on the grounds of public safety. Partial-pedestrianization will be extremely dangerous for pedestrians, including regular users, who will be bewildered by an arrangement that will be unfamiliar and hard to understand, an arrangement that will be made even more confusing by the meandering, non-linear movement of vehicles. The absence of vertical upstand kerbs and no clear delineation between pavement and road, between pedestrians and permitted traffic, will be a major source of confusion and uncertainty. I have come across such a unification of vehicular and pedestrian routes elsewhere on the odd occasion; as a pedestrian one seems to have the run of the place, then suddenly a vehicle appears from nowhere and one leaps for one's life. If you see The Times you may have read the letter from D Wright on 24 January in which he tells how on a "footstreet" in York where pedestrians and permitted cars are allowed to mingle his wife was pushed over from behind by a car quietly travelling at no more than 5mph; her foot was trapped under the front wheel and she suffered a broken bone. If full pedestrianization is not a practical possibility the solution is obvious: abandon any thought of partial-pedestrianization.

I believe the points I have raised are of sufficient weight and merit to justify a public inquiry and I urge you to convene one as soon as possible.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and answer the question in the first paragraph.

Very many thanks

Formal response from Surrey County Council:

Our Ref: 7403/D3514/NH

6th December 2007

Dear,

**RE: PEDESTRIANISATION OF PARK STREET, CAMBERLEY,
DUE TO THE ATRIUM REDEVELOPMENT**

Further to your letter of 30th July 2007, by which you objected to the pedestrianisation of Park Street, I am writing to respond to the very detailed points you made. Thank you for taking the time to consider the proposal in such detail. I will answer the points you raise in turn. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I have missed, or indeed misunderstood any of your points. Surrey County Council's primary interest is in its role as Highway Authority. Surrey Heath Borough Council is the planning authority, and duly scrutinised the Atrium redevelopment through the planning process. Nevertheless highway and planning considerations do overlap, and this response draws on both as appropriate.

You argue that pedestrianisation of Park Street should be considered independently of the Atrium development. This is very much a matter of opinion. You may be aware that the Surrey Heath Local Plan 2000 policy TC10, "Pedestrian Friendly Areas", identifies Park Street for pedestrianisation, and makes explicitly clear that this would be sought as part of any development in accordance with policy TC19, "Land West of Park Street". Thus Surrey Heath Borough Council, as Local Planning Authority, considers the pedestrianisation of Park Street to be very much dependent on the development of land west of Park Street. The Atrium project therefore includes pedestrianisation of Park Street as a key element of its design, along with numerous other modifications to the local Highway network. Surrey County Council also considers the proposed pedestrianisation to be an integral part of the Atrium development.

As a more general point, the Surrey Heath Local Plan 2000 identifies a number of areas in the centre of Camberley to be redeveloped into "Pedestrian Friendly Areas". This is in line with latest government guidance, for example Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport, which suggests pedestrianisation as one of a range of measures to enhance accessibility and encourage walking within town centres:

"Within town centres and other areas with a mixture of land uses, priority should be given to people over traffic. Well designed pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority schemes generally prove popular and commercially successful, and local authorities should actively consider traffic calming and the reallocation of road space to promote safe walking and cycling and to give priority to public transport."

"Local authorities should pay particular attention to the design, location and access arrangements of new development to help promote walking as a prime means of access"

"Local authorities ... should also promote walking through measures such as pedestrianisation schemes where vehicle access is restricted or prohibited to boost the attractiveness of town and local centres for shopping, employment and leisure uses."

The areas identified in the Surrey Heath Local Plan 2000 would benefit from pedestrianisation regardless of redevelopment of adjacent land – in accordance with the latest government planning guidance outlined above. However the cost of pedestrianisation is substantial, and so local authorities frequently work with developers to bring such schemes to fruition. In the case of Park Street, Surrey Heath

Borough Council and Surrey County Council believe that pedestrianisation of Park Street would be beneficial to Park Street itself, and the wider town centre. The Atrium development provides the means by which pedestrianisation can be achieved, and also provides additional shops and other amenities, all of which will benefit from pedestrianisation. Given the speed with which the Atrium retail and other units are being leased to a wide variety of different businesses, it seems that those businesses feel that the Atrium scheme as a whole, including the pedestrianisation of Park Street, merits substantial investment. Surrey County Council believes that pedestrianisation of Park Street will maximise connectivity and accessibility between the new shops and amenities of The Atrium with existing shops and amenities to the east of Park Street. The vitality of the town centre depends on the quality of the experience of pedestrians – the sense of safety, the absence of noise, the freedom to move in any direction at will. Removing as many motor vehicles as possible from Park Street will enable pedestrians to move freely between the new and existing shops and amenities.

You suggest that pedestrianisation of Park Street would result in increased congestion and pollution, and that it would encourage traffic to divert along unsuitable residential roads. You cite estimates of the increase in vehicle movements as a result of The Atrium development. You may be aware that as part of the planning process, the developer submitted a detailed Transport Assessment, to quantify the likely impact on Camberley of the Atrium redevelopment. This Transport Assessment is used to determine what additional infrastructure would be required to accommodate forecast traffic flows safely and efficiently. A number of junctions were identified for substantial modification, and an entirely new two-way road is proposed to connect London Road to Southwell Park Road west of Park Street. There are also numerous measures to encourage visitors to Camberley town centre to travel by public transport, or to walk or cycle. The developer is now committed through its planning obligations to Surrey Heath Borough Council, and through an agreement under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 with Surrey County Council, to provide approximately £4M worth of highway and transportation improvements. These improvements are fully consistent with Surrey County Council's Local Transport Plan aims of reducing congestion, enhancing road safety, improving accessibility, promoting public transport, and widening the choice of transport modes.

I have listed a number of specific improvements proposed for Camberley, due to be delivered as part of the Atrium project – please note that this list is not exhaustive:

- As mentioned above, an entirely new two-way road connecting Southwell Park Road to London Road is due to open next year – this road will be to the west of Park Street, and will skirt the western elevation of the Atrium. This road will be known as Charles Street. It will connect to Lower Charles Street via a new roundabout at its northern end. Charles Street will include bus stop facilities, a taxi rank, and a lay-by for drivers to pick-up and drop-off passengers, and to load and unload goods. This new road will be the main access route into Camberley from London Road to the west, as a direct substitute for Park Street. Being a two-way road, Charles Street will allow drivers to access London Road from Camberley town centre at its western end, without driving through the residential Southwell Park area – something that was not possible before the Atrium development – Park Street being only one-way.
- A new traffic signalised junction is almost complete at the junction of Lower Charles Street and London Road, to enable safe and efficient movement of traffic to and from Camberley town centre via Charles Street. This new junction will

include push-button controlled pedestrian crossing facilities enabling pedestrians to cross Lower Charles Street safely.

- A new push-button controlled crossing will be commissioned shortly on Southwell Park Road, between Firwood Drive and Park Street. This new crossing will enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross Southwell Park Road safely.
- The bus stops in Pembroke Broadway are to be upgraded with new, larger bus shelters, to provide a designated public transport interchange zone. A new push-button controlled crossing will be constructed on Pembroke Broadway adjacent to the alleyway link to Princess Way. This will provide a direct link for pedestrians to cross Pembroke Broadway to the bus stops on the south side of the road, and to the railway station. In addition the taxi rank outside the railway station will be enlarged to accommodate four taxis.
- A new cycle route is proposed to connect London Road through to the railway station – via Lower Charles Street, Southern Road, Southwell Park Road and Pembroke Broadway.
- It is proposed to provide traffic calming in Southwell Park Road, west of Southern Road, and in Grand Avenue. The intention is to discourage through-traffic from using these residential roads, and instead to use Charles Street. The nature of the traffic calming will be the subject of consultation with the residents of these roads in due course.

The proposed new highway layout was subject to extensive traffic modelling as part of the planning process – including the reassignment and redistribution of traffic as a result of the proposed pedestrianisation of Park Street. This was assessed in detail before planning permission was granted. Surrey County Council is confident that the proposed package of highway and transport improvements will mitigate the anticipated increase in traffic to a level that will not be to the detriment of highway safety or the convenience of highway users.

You question whether pedestrians have problems crossing Park Street. Roads are often perceived as barriers to safe and convenient pedestrian movement – regular correspondence from residents across the county bears witness to this. In the case of Park Street, the traffic flow and pattern of parking resulted in there being very few safe crossing points – one of which was the pelican at Obelisk Way. Surrey County Council's view is that the removal of as many motor vehicles as possible from Park Street will maximise accessibility for pedestrians between The Atrium and other parts of the town centre, as mentioned above.

You suggest that The Atrium will comprise mostly catering establishments rather than shops. In fact the majority of the new units fronting onto Park Street will be retail outlets. Therefore Park Street will be very much a retail street. I do not doubt that Park Street served the dual purpose of a retail street and two-way thoroughfare in the 1950s and 1960s. However the last 40 years has seen enormous change. For example the advent of the out-of-town supermarket has resulted in the disappearance of many town centre green grocers, butchers and bakers – the nature of town centres has changed and continues to change. Moreover a number of the original retail units in Park Street were vacant and dilapidated before the Atrium development. The revitalisation of the west side of Camberley town centre will be of benefit to the whole town centre. As the government guidance cited above suggests, pedestrianisation is an important contributor to this revitalisation. Furthermore the increase in car ownership and usage over the last 40 years has resulted in many people

feeling dependent on the private car as their only viable means of transport – even for journeys that could easily be made on foot. As a consequence it is now accepted that pedestrian movement and public transport should be given a much higher priority, and in so doing, the private car should no longer be allowed to dominate town centres, thus discouraging car use. It is also recognised that as a society, we cannot continue to support and encourage unrestrained growth in car ownership and usage. The detrimental impact of congestion is obvious to all, and the cumulative effect of pollution on the environment is becoming widely understood. Surrey County Council fully subscribes to the necessity to encourage people to choose more sustainable modes of transport. Accordingly our Local Transport Plan includes strategies to promote walking, cycling and public transport. It also includes measures to manage traffic and parking within town centres to promote pedestrian activity and accessibility. However it is recognised that as well as encouraging non-car modes of transport, it is essential to make use of the private car less attractive – a carrot and stick approach. The proposed pedestrianisation serves this dual purpose very well. It would give Park Street almost entirely over for pedestrian use, and at the same time make access to Camberley town centre by private car slightly less convenient.

You assert that the proposed pedestrianisation will result in loss of access for “ordinary motorists and cyclists”. I disagree. For motorists there will be two multi-storey car parks within very close proximity to Park Street, from which there will be a short walk to Park Street. There will be provision for disabled parking at either end of Park Street. Furthermore the prohibition of traffic order includes a general exemption for disabled drivers, who will continue to be able to drive into Park Street by presenting their blue badge at the entry point. Cyclists will not be permitted to cycle along Park Street, however they will be able to push their bicycles within the limits of the pedestrianisation. Therefore there will be convenient access for both able-bodied and disabled motorists, and also for cyclists, albeit on foot. Elsewhere in the town centre the Atrium development is providing new pedestrian crossing facilities and new cycle routes – as detailed above.

You suggest that pedestrianisation would cause severe inconvenience to those needing to deliver large quantities of coin to the bank. As mentioned above, there is ample parking provision nearby for able-bodied motorists, and disabled motorists are catered for in terms of both parking provision and access. In addition there is a loading-only facility proposed for Princess Way (West). Therefore it will be perfectly possible for ordinary motorists to deliver and collect goods to and from premises in Park Street. Furthermore there is a general exemption in the prohibition of traffic order that allows drivers to enter Park Street for the purposes of picking up goods, subject to obtaining written consent from premises in Park Street. This provision is intended for motorists who need to collect goods that cannot easily be carried.

You suggest that Park Street should be restored to a two-way thoroughfare. This is not an option for the foreseeable future. It would be contrary to the Surrey Heath Borough Council Local Plan 2000, and contrary to Surrey County Council’s Local Transport Plan aims and objectives. It would also be contrary to government planning guidance, as cited above.

Lastly you question the safety of “partial pedestrianisation”. Full pedestrianisation is not feasible for Park Street. There are a number of private car parks accessed from either Park Street or St Mary’s Road; there are numerous businesses whose only access for servicing is from Park Street, or Service Area 3 or 5. We are therefore obliged to provide access for a limited number of vehicles. What Surrey County

Council has proposed is to deny access to as many vehicles as possible. I agree that full pedestrianisation would be preferable; what is proposed is as near to that as possible.

You cite an example of a personal injury accident on a “footstreet” in York. Surrey County Council works hard to reduce risk and the likely severity of an accident, and to this end all the highway improvement proposals are subject to a rigorous safety audit. This is a three stage process, with two stages already completed during design, and a third stage that will be undertaken on completion of the works. The Atrium project is no exception, and is being subjected to this rigorous safety audit process. Any problems arising from the sharing of Park Street between pedestrians and a limited number of vehicles – and there have been none identified so far – will be dealt with. It is impossible to remove the risk of an accident altogether. With regard to the accident in York, I have contacted City of York Council to investigate the circumstances further. The accident took place at approximately midday in December 2006. City of York Council were able to corroborate the details you cite – that a pedestrian was struck by a slow moving vehicle, and the pedestrian’s foot was caught underneath the front tyre of the vehicle. This is the only personal injury accident on this footstreet in the last three-year period – the period normally used for comparing accident patterns at different sites. In fact this is the only personal injury accident on this footstreet in City of York Council’s accident database, which is complete back to 2000. Therefore the accident may be considered to be a one-off. Moreover City of York Council have informed me that there is no particular problem with accidents on its footstreet network.

I hope I have answered all the points you raised in your letter of 30th July. I am sorry it has taken some time to respond. I would encourage you to reconsider your original objection in the light of this reply, and I look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours Sincerely,

Formal response from objector:

21 December 2007

N Healy, Esq.
Surrey Highways
Grosvenor House
London Rd
Guildford GU1A 1FA

Dear Mr Healy

Thank you for your letter (7403/D3514/NH) of 6 December. I am grateful for the comprehensiveness of your reply but intend to sustain my objection. I have tried to keep this letter to a reasonable length but hope I have nevertheless addressed the main points.

You challenge my view that the Atrium project and the "pedestrianization" of Park St should be seen as entirely separate issues, neither being dependent on the other. I do not accept that that is merely a matter of opinion: it is glaringly obvious that the components of the Atrium could do business perfectly satisfactorily in the absence of pedestrianization in the same way that existing and previous businesses on both sides of Park St have done. I am afraid I regard the SHBC and SCC claim that genuine interdependence exists as spurious. Similarly, the assertion that pedestrianization is a "key element" is not supported by a shred of evidence. (Is it seriously suggested that the Atrium is doomed to failure if Park St survives in its present form?)

I am unimpressed by the references to the 2000 Local Plan; I began my "campaign" against pedestrianization long before 2000. PPG13 is interesting but does not invalidate my objection. (I note it refers to "well-designed" schemes; as you know I regard the proposal for part-pedestrianization as anything but well-designed; it certainly would not promote "safe walking". "Safe cycling" implies that cycling would be permitted, which of course is not the case. How exactly would the pedestrianization scheme give the priority to public transport required by PPG13 when buses would be banned from using Park St? How would pedestrianizing Park St "help promote walking" - let alone "safe walking"?)

It may be that all the businesses queuing up to lease premises in the Atrium are in favour of pedestrianization (you stop short of being as positive as that) but you would not expect that to alter my views.

I do not accept that the innovations you mention would compensate for the loss of Park St as a thoroughfare for all traffic. (The entirely new road (Charles St) will merely replace the old two-way Southern Rd; there is no increase in road capacity. I have always been opposed to the conversion of Park St to a one-way street.)

As far as your claim that pedestrians have problems in crossing Park St is concerned I can only repeat that that is not borne out by my own long experience.

I am pleased to know that my impression that the number of shops in the Atrium will be significantly exceeded by the number of eating and drinking houses is mistaken (no doubt the rumour that some of the units intended for retail are to be taken by a dentist, a solicitor and a physiotherapist is also unfounded). But that of course does not alter my belief that pedestrianization is not necessary to revitalizing Park St as a retail street. And I do not believe pedestrianizing Park St would discourage car use. (If there were a serious desire to restrain traffic growth in Camberley there would be no Atrium.)

Your remedies for people deprived of the opportunity to cycle into and along Park St, and to drive into and along Park St, and park eg near the bank, cut no ice. If I can't conveniently visit the Park St bank I shan't be using the bike and I shan't be parking the car in a multi-storey car park; I shall drive to the Natwest in Frimley (so much for your proposal serving to reduce car usage!).

The unfortunate unlikelihood of restoring Park St's two-way status does not affect my belief that it would be the right thing to do.

If full pedestrianization is not favoured then there should be no question of partial pedestrianization, for the detailed reasons given in my letter of 30 July. Since writing that letter I have experienced precisely the situation I envisaged. Cutting through from Upper Charles St I emerged into a Park St completely devoid of traffic. In spite of knowing full well that traffic could appear any minute I was lulled into a false sense of security by the new road surface and wandered southwards in the middle of the road, my mind on other things; fortunately my attention was drawn to the vehicle fast approaching from the north. There is no doubt that partial pedestrianization is potentially hazardous and should be ruled out of consideration.

I hope you can convince SHBC that they should drop the proposal.

With kind regards *and the compliments of the season*

Yours sincerely