



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(WAVERLEY)**

**A31 ALTON ROAD: COXBRIDGE TO COUNTY BOUNDARY,
FARNHAM**

12 DECEMBER 2008

KEY ISSUE

To report progress on the ongoing road safety review being undertaken for the A31 west of Coxbridge Roundabout in consultation with Hampshire County Council, and authorise extending the planned reduction of the eastbound carriageway to a single lane within Hampshire into Surrey.

SUMMARY

In September the committee considered a report on the A31 west of Coxbridge roundabout and agreed that consultations be initiated on the closure of two central reservation gaps at Chamber Lane and the Farnham House Hotel, and that at the same time options to improve and so retain them should be investigated. This work is under way, but no recommendation is made at present pending further consultation and analysis.

Hampshire County Council (HCC) intends to reduce the eastbound (London bound) carriageway to a single lane from the Bull Inn (junction with Gravel Hill Lane), through the access to the Northbrook Estate, to a point approaching the Hampshire/Surrey boundary. Originally planned for introduction in October/November, HCC is still committed to this work, but now expects to complete it early in 2009. The committee is asked to authorise extending the reduction to a single lane across the boundary through the junctions with Chamber Lane and the Farnham House Hotel.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to:

- (i) Agree that, if Hampshire County Council reduces the eastbound carriageway of the A31 to a single lane on the approach to the Surrey boundary, this treatment be extended through the junctions with Chamber Lane and the Farnham House Hotel, before reverting to two lanes at a point just to the west of the hotel, subject to the availability of funding.
- (ii) Agree that the Local Highways Manager should bring a further report to this committee on options for improving safety on the A31 west of Coxbridge Roundabout.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The report to Committee in September described the nature of the road, and the complementary approach towards improving road safety being developed by Surrey County Council (SCC) and HCC.
- 1.2 Within the two counties, accidents are regularly reported on the A31 between Coxbridge Roundabout and the Bentley Bypass, frequently involving vehicles travelling at high speed. On the Surrey section, the Police recorded 19 injury accidents in the three-year period 2005 to 2007. A number could be questioned as possibly being unconnected with the nature of the road itself (drink/drugs, animals in the road, etc) but, even on discounting these, this section of the A31 has an accident rate three times the national average for comparable dual carriageways.
- 1.3 As reported in September, the Local Highways Manager's immediate concern is the inadequate and potentially hazardous central reservation gaps at Chamber Lane and the Farnham House.

2. PROGRESS

2.1 Consultation on closing the gaps

Letters asking residents for their views on closing the Chamber Lane gap were sent out in October covering an area within Surrey to the north of the A31. Opinion was divided, with around half in favour of closure, and half in preferring the suggested alternative of reducing the A31 westbound to a single lane and keeping the gap open.

- 2.2 The local SCC member and officers met with those whose dwellings or businesses are served by the private access road to the Farnham House Hotel (it should be noted these residents and businesses have no other access to the road network). Understandably, there was unanimous opposition to closing the gap, not least because of direct personal and economic impact. However, many present felt the gap was very hazardous to use, and would welcome improvements to make it safer.

2.3 Gap Usage

A peak hour turning count was undertaken at Chamber Lane earlier in the year for a single weekday. This indicated very few vehicles turn right from the A31 into the side road, and the only significant movement is in the afternoon peak, when around 60 vehicles per hour exit Chamber Lane to turn right on to the A31 westbound.

2.4 The count findings were challenged by residents at the hotel access meeting, who felt some movements may be higher than indicated, and further counts have been commissioned to establish turning patterns.

2.5 Counts have not been undertaken at the hotel access gap, but the hotel proprietors have provided estimates of significant traffic levels generated by regular events, particularly weddings, at their establishment.

2.6 *Option development*

Work continues on developing and costing options.

3. SINGLE LANE EASTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY

3.1 *Work by Hampshire CC*

Hampshire County Council (HCC) intends to reduce the eastbound (London bound) carriageway to a single lane from the Bull Inn (junction with Gravel Hill Lane), through the access to the Northbrook Estate, to a point approaching the Hampshire/Surrey boundary. Originally planned for introduction in October/November, HCC is still committed to this work, but now expects to complete it early in 2009.

3.2 *Extending the single lane into Surrey*

The Committee is asked to authorise extending the reduction to a single lane in Hampshire across the county boundary, and through the junctions with Chamber Lane and the Farnham House Hotel. The road would revert to two lanes just to the west of the hotel access. This would only be done if Hampshire CC proceeds as planned and as available funding permits.

3.3 Reducing the road to a single lane will bring average speeds down. It will also allow improvements at the two side roads, namely permitting the introduction of deceleration splays for the left turn from the A31, and allowing a worthwhile increase in the effective width of the central reservation.

3.4 The lane reduction would be effected largely by hatched road marking.

3.5 If HCC makes the lane reduction in isolation it is likely that, as the road re-opens to two lanes on entering Surrey, drivers will accelerate, and overtaking manoeuvres will increase on the straight approaching Chamber Lane.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Progress has been made as described above, but further work and consultations, particularly with those served by the hotel gap, is required before further recommendations are brought to the committee.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 As well as the consultation with Surrey residents described above, SCC officers are in regular contact with their HCC counterparts, and the Local Highways Manager has met with representatives of the Northbrook Estate on the Surrey/ Hampshire border to discuss potential impacts on businesses there.

6. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No funding has been allocated by the local committee towards this work in 2008/09. To date, the centrally held Accident Working Group budget has funded SCC officer time for progressing the investigation.
- 6.2 If approved, the Local Highways Manager will explore the possibility of utilising developer funding associated with Coxbridge Business Park to fund extending the reduction to a single lane within Hampshire into Surrey.

7. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific equalities or diversity implications for this report.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications for this report.

9. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

As above.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 10.1 If agreed, the recommendations above will be progressed.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None