

**LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)****PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSES****30 JANUARY 2009****1. From Mr John Page (Grafham Grange Educational Trust)**

For some time the Grafham Grange Educational Trust has been concerned about the lack of speed restrictions adjacent to the two special needs schools which students attend during the week. At a site meeting with the Local Highways Manager in February 2008, the School suggested:

- A reduction in the speed limit on this section of the A281
- Additional School signs, both beside the road and marked on the road surface
- Signs with flashing amber lights that can be activated by staff on departure
- Other road markings to warn approaching traffic of the hazard
- Construction of a "slip" lane for traffic turning left from the main road into Woodyer House
- Construction of a central reservation on the brow of the hill adjacent to the main entrance

Our suggestions were mostly considered too costly and we were not convinced that the limited additional road markings proposed would sufficiently improve safety. To our knowledge the only alterations made have been the painting of SLOW signs on both sides of the road on the approach to the bends. The Trust has forbidden drivers from taking a right hand exit out of Woodyer House. It is understood that the "sight lines" for both school entrances are such that drivers would not have time to stop even if travelling at 30mph.

Travelling southwards from Bramley, the speed limit changes from 40mph to 50mph in the vicinity of the Grafham Room and continues at this level past both Woodyer House School on the east and Grafham Grange on the west side. There is a road sign just prior to the Grafham Grange entrance indicating the bend and recommending a reduction in speed. Shortly afterwards a School is indicated on the left and a further sign warns of bends for 680 yards. When leaving Woodyer House and turning left vision is badly restricted by a bend in the road.

Travelling northwards the 50mph limit begins before Bottle Cottage and extends past the Grafham Grange entrances; there are slow signs for dangerous bends and a school sign. Drivers turning left out of Grafham Grange have restricted vision because of the blind hill and turning right is extremely hazardous. Attempts to widen the entrance, allowing school traffic both in and out by moving the gateposts, have been thwarted by English Heritage as both the building and the gate are listed.

Traffic on both sides of the road can proceed at 50mph past both schools. As Chairman of the Governors' Health and Safety Committee I would like to ask the Committee what action it will take to address these concerns and to prevent a fatal accident at this location.

Response

Early in 2008 all the old road signs on the A281 through Grafham advising drivers of bends, side roads and the schools were renewed and augmented with additional high visibility chevron and other signs. The road markings were refreshed, with additional SLOW markings as mentioned in the question, and new cats' eyes were installed. This work was aimed at encouraging drivers to proceed with care through the bends at Grafham, improve road safety and reduce accidents.

It is intended to reduce the speed limit past the Grafham Grange Educational Trust schools, much as suggested in the question, and as a direct result of the meeting with County Council officers in March. Earlier in January the County Council advertised proposed changes to speed limits on a number of roads in the areas of Cranleigh and Alfold, including the A281 at Grafham. Subject to any objections that may be received, the 40mph limit which currently terminates at the Rushett Common cricket field will be extended southwards to a point to the south of Woodyer House, which is Trust school premises. The new limit is expected to be introduced in the spring and should add to the measures already in place encouraging careful driving.

2. From Mr Paul Charlton (Godalming: Frith Hill Area Residents' Association)

We estimate that approximately 600 of the residents of our 740 represented households use one or both of the Deanery Road (Godalming) junctions every time that they use their car. At the March 2008 meeting of the Local Committee a budget programme was agreed that included preparatory work for improvement of the Deanery Road / Borough Road / Charterhouse Road / Chalk Road junction in Godalming. Following that meeting this Association delivered a letter to Surrey CC welcoming this development, and welcoming Councillor Slyfield's support of it. Noting Councillor Peter Martin's comments about awaiting the introduction of possible links to redevelopment of the Charterhouse Garage site, we expressed the hope that safety would not be compromised by any further delays unless it was clear that the garage site was to be redeveloped in the very near future.

The other troublesome junction in Deanery Road involves the sharp, blind corner where the very steep downhill slope of Frith Hill Road joins Deanery Road at an acute angle. We also asked what the plans were for that junction, at which there was yet another (virtually head-on) collision as recently as 13th January 2009.

We are aware that the County Council has been involved in a change of contact personnel at about the time of our letter and have therefore waited patiently for a response to the points raised within it.

The particular points regarding Deanery Road that we would seek to raise are:

- Observations are based upon the version of plans that we have seen, dated 18/11/08. Although we welcome the likelihood that double yellow lines opposite the Frith Hill Road junction may reduce the prevalence of dangerous illegal parking there, we do not believe that the lines alone will make a significant contribution to the inherent safety of this dangerous junction.
- We welcome the proposal to deregulate the Borough Road zone, thus potentially deflecting rail commuters from all-day parking in Deanery Road. We hope that due consideration will be given to drivers having to navigate around long bays of parked cars in the face of oncoming traffic.
- We believe that the proposals regarding the easterly 'restricted waiting' bay in Deanery Road could potentially encounter a minor localised problem because the house known as 'Frith Hatch' has two extant planning permissions involving vehicular access uphill onto Deanery Road in this vicinity, introducing a potential conflict of access.
- Our residents advise us that there is an ongoing tendency for all preceding junction works over the last 20 years on the Borough Road junction to have suffered from a pattern of noticeable but very localised mid-road ground subsidence within a few months of each project's completion. This is observed to significantly disturb the stability of all traffic passing through the junction.
- We welcome the potential improvements to the Deanery Road / Charterhouse Road / Borough Road junction, but would like to remind the committee that traffic entering this junction from Charterhouse Road will approach from a downhill blind curve. We receive many reports from residents that the steep downhill gradient encourages higher than permissible speeds on Charterhouse Road.

May we please ask that these points be taken into account by the Committee, and ask whether we may be kept informed as plans for these two Deanery Road junctions develop ?

Response

The agenda for this meeting includes a report on proposed amendments to on-street parking in Godalming and Farncombe (Item 9). The points included in the question refer to various details of these proposals, and will be considered as responses to the planned formal consultation, programmed to start at the end of February.

The Committee allocated £6,000 towards design of the Deanery Road/Borough Road/Charterhouse Road/Chalk Road junction in the current financial year, and an initial engineering assessment was completed shortly before Christmas. It is suggested that the next step is for officers to discuss options for improving the junction with representatives of the Residents' Association.

3. From Mr David Somner (Godalming: Frith Hill Area Residents' Association)

The question concerns urgent safety issues involving Charterhouse Road/Twycross Road Roundabout in Godalming. We estimate that approximately 400 of the residents of our 740 represented households use this roundabout every time that they use their car. Several months ago, the blue 'roundabout advisory' sign facing drivers using the Hurtmore Road approach to the Charterhouse Road / Twycross Road mini-roundabout was knocked down. This Association, amongst others, alerted the County Council on 13th November 2008. Since then the broken sign and pole have been collected and the hole filled in. Most importantly though, the sign has not yet been replaced, meaning that there is no roundabout warning in place at all.

There is a very serious risk that vehicles may proceed at full speed into the roundabout on the basis that they are not aware of its existence at all, which could cause a collision with uphill traffic using their right of way to turn right from Charterhouse Road into Twycross Road. This potential turning traffic only becomes visible during the last few seconds of approach.

Specific risk factors include :-

- The sudden increase in downward slope just before the junction lowering the visibility of the road markings, especially in wet-road conditions when the slope also increases risk of skidding.
- The 'partially blind' approach due to the distinct bend in the road at that point masking any indication of traffic approaching uphill from the opposite side of the roundabout.
- The speed of traffic approaching from the Hurtmore Road direction is higher than average because drivers have often recently left the A3, and are often not aware that this is a 30mph zone.
- Our law-abiding residents regularly inform us that they are 'tailgated' and pressurised by the gesticulations of increasingly aggressive drivers urging them to go faster. It appears that this is particularly prevalent on the section past Charterhouse School fields and does not happen to anywhere near the same extent within other 30mph zones in Godalming.
- The Hurtmore Road that approaches the roundabout is particularly open and wide along its length, and most of the lampposts that may otherwise reinforce the impression that this is a 30 mph zone are hidden or partially hidden by vegetation for much of this section. We would not advocate a fierce cutback of this vegetation though, as it would soon regrow. This greenery greatly assists in maintaining a leafy approach to Godalming from the A3.

Possible options may include repeater signs showing '30 mph' as used on the earlier approaches from the A3, or failing that a DoT dispensation to use '30 mph' painted street-level roundels may be a possible alternative, especially as this section of road runs alongside Charterhouse School playing fields and all of the main school exit routes emerge into this road. Most importantly, we strongly advocate reinforcement of the approach warnings well before the Twycross Road roundabout. Perhaps this could involve introducing a clearly marked 'Give Way in 80 Yards' warning sign, as already installed near the junction with Priorsfield Road.

May we therefore please ask that the original form of roundabout advisory sign be replaced as soon as is possible, and also ask that due consideration be given to the particular problems presented by this dangerous section of road ?

Response

An order was placed some time ago for replacing the missing roundabout sign, and this should be installed in the near future. With regard to the concerns expressed, and the suggestions put forward, the Local Highways Manager will visit the site to assess whether additional road signs and markings are likely to benefit road safety, and arrange for installation as appropriate.

4. From Mr Peter Monk (Alton Line Users' Association)

The Alton Line Users' Association (ALUA), the Rail User Group for the Alton Line, is aware that South West Trains (SWT) has made a bid to the Department for Transport's (DfT) 'Access for All' Small Schemes Fund for matched funding to carry out improvements at passenger stations to improve access for disabled users, including the provision of a split-height ticket office counter and accessible drop-off facilities at Farnham Station.

These are relatively minor, but nevertheless welcome, improvements and ALUA supports these whole-heartedly:

- The accessible drop-off bay at Farnham will enhance the drop-off opportunities further by providing a dedicated area at the front of the station allowing passengers to be dropped off in order to meet connecting trains.
- The split height ticket counter will provide facilities for wheelchair users and persons of small stature allowing them easier access to the ticket office.

South West Trains state that the scheme will indirectly increase usage by providing additional facilities as part of their strategy to provide consistent facilities for disabled passengers on the South West Trains network. It should also be noted that Farnham is the accessible station closest to Alton in the event of operational problems or due to some longer trains blocking the access at Alton, and that that station is not staffed throughout service. Farnham station is often used as point from which to forward passengers by taxi to Alton, particularly in an evening.

The total scheme cost is £30,500 and the DfT has been requested to provide 50% of this amount under match funding arrangements. Any financial contribution from the community benefiting from the provision of such facilities would emphasise the importance with which the affected community views these. Subject to approval of funding the work would be scheduled for June/July 2009. All of the planned improvements will be installed in accordance with the Accessible Train and Station Design: A Code of Practice (2008). Should any unforeseen difficulties make compliance impossible SWT will notify the DfT and seek guidance as to the most suitable way to progress.

In the light of the above will the Local Committee agree to write to the DfT endorsing SWT's bid and is there any means by which the Committee could offer a financial contribution towards the cost in order to emphasise the value of these facilities to the Farnham community ?

Response

ITEM 5

The Local Committee notes the proposed improvements at Farnham Station and, subject to the agreement of members, is prepared to endorse the need for these and the benefits which they will bring to users.

Local County Councillors have agreed to consider in principle the possibility of allocating funding from the Local Committee budget, but will defer a decision until the viability of the project and the amount of any additional funding required is confirmed.