



BLACKHORSE ROAD / BERRY LANE / HEATH HOUSE ROAD

LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR WOKING 28 JANUARY 2004

KEY ISSUE:

To consider proposals for traffic management measures, in response to a petition, to improve safety along Blackhorse Road, in particular at its crossroads junction with Heath House Road and Saunders Lane and for changes in the local speed limits.

SUMMARY:

A package of measures is proposed to improve the safety along Blackhorse Road, particularly at the crossroads. These comprise of permanent vehicle activated signs, warning of the crossroads, STOP signs and lines and the re-alignment of the kerb line and STOP line at the end of Heath House Road to improve visibility. It is also proposed to reduce the speed limit along Blackhorse Road, Berry Lane, Saunders Lane and Smarts Heath Road and improve the signing for the weight limit and low railway bridge in Blackhorse Road.

CONSULTATIONS:

Residents of Blackhorse Road and part of Heath House Road and Berry Lane have been consulted and have provided their comments and views via a pro forma, attached as Annex A, and some attended a public meeting held at Brookwood Memorial Hall on 16th December 2003. The Brookwood Village Association was also consulted during the development of the proposals.

County and Borough Members have received a copy of the consultation document and this paper. Several of the Members have met with Officers to discuss the proposals.

The Police are aware of the survey outcome and proposed action.

Network Rail has also been consulted with regard to changing the signs on the railway bridge.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree:

that the proposals shown on drawings No 11668, 11669 and 11670 be approved for construction

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The D3680 Blackhorse Road is a local distributor road 1870 metres long, running roughly parallel to the A322 Bagshot Road. Approximately halfway along the road there is a crossroads junction with Heath House Road and Saunders Lane. Blackhorse Road forms part of an alternative route to drivers wishing to avoid using Brookwood Crossroads.
2. A petition was submitted to the 22nd October 2003 meeting of the Local Committee containing approximately 450 signatures calling for action to be taken in Blackhorse Road as follows;
 - (i) a 30mph speed limit with accompanying cameras and signs; double white central lining to prevent overtaking and relevant signs;
 - (ii) visibility and signage improvements at the crossroads and Berry Lane junctions;
 - (iii) physical constraints at an appropriate distance both north and south of the crossroads
 - (iv) larger warning signs at the southern end of Blackhorse Road and at the crossroads advising lorries of the low height of the railway bridge at the northern end of Blackhorse Road.
3. During Public Question Time at the 22nd October 2003 meeting, a question was asked about safety along Berry Lane, especially at the junction with Blackhorse Road and Smarts Heath Road.
4. Blackhorse Road, Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road are currently subject to a 50mph speed limit. Between Fox Corner and Brookwood crossroads, the A322 is subject to 50mph, 40mph and 30mph speed limits. Heath House Road has a 40mph limit over its entire length and Saunders Lane has a 30mph speed limit apart from the last 150 metres before Blackhorse Road, which is 40mph.
5. In the last 3 years, there have been 14 personal injury accidents along Blackhorse Road, including those at its junctions with Brookwood Lye Road and Berry Lane / Smarts Heath Road. Of these, 6 occurred at or in the immediate vicinity of its crossroads junction with Saunders Lane and Heath House Road. It should be noted that all of these injury accidents were slight (13) or serious (1) in nature; the last recorded fatal accident along the road was more than 3 years ago. Apart from those at the crossroads, there is no clear pattern to the accidents.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

6. Speed surveys were carried out between 27th November and 4th December 2003 to determine existing speeds and assess a possible reduction in the speed limit along Blackhorse Road. The recorded 85th percentile speeds at four locations along the road suggest that a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph might be appropriate, as does an

assessment based on Surrey County Council's speed limit policy. The speed survey results are shown at Annex B.

7. Response to petitioners' requests;

(i) Speed limits and no overtaking lines.

The recorded speeds indicate that a 30mph limit would be inappropriately low and could not be enforced without rigorous traffic calming measures. These in turn would require street lighting to be introduced in order to conform to The Highway (Road Humps) Regulations 1996.

Introducing a 40mph speed limit along Blackhorse Road would result in disparities with the speed limits on other, similar roads in the area, namely Saunders Lane, Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road. The short length of 40mph speed limit in Saunders Lane has already been mentioned and it would be eminently sensible to extend the 30mph speed limit to the crossroads to make the entire road the same speed limit.

Speed surveys along Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road were undertaken during the writing of this report and the results will be reported orally at the meeting of the Local Committee. However, Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road are similar in nature to Blackhorse Road and speed limit assessments based on the Council's speed limit policy suggest that a 40mph limit would also be applicable in these two roads. Although there have been 13 slight injury accidents along the road, the record of serious injury and fatal accidents does not satisfy the Department for Transport's criteria for siting Road Safety Cameras.

The forward visibility along Blackhorse Road is sufficiently good to preclude the use of a double white line system of road markings to prohibit overtaking.

(ii) Visibility and signing at the crossroads.

Subject to the necessary authorisation, the existing Give Way signs at the crossroads will be changed to STOP signs and road markings. The STOP line at the end of Heath House Road can be moved slightly further forward to improve sightlines. Similarly, a more rigorous hedge-trimming regime will be introduced to reduce the impact of overhanging vegetation.

(iii) Physical controls.

Physical constraints north and south of the crossroads may either take the form of road humps or cushions, as mentioned in (i), above, or with a priority Give Way feature consisting of a kerb build out to slow one lane of traffic. Such a feature would

need to be illuminated but even so, could present a hazard to traffic using the road. It would only be of value if there was opposing traffic to give way to and experience has shown that vehicle speeds can increase around such features when drivers try to beat oncoming traffic rather than give way to it.

(iv) Signing.

It is proposed to enhance the signing for the weight limit and the low bridge. It is intended that circular, regulatory bridge height signs can be used rather than triangular warning signs. This will allow both imperial and metric units to be easily and clearly displayed. A letter has already been sent to Network Rail to discuss changing the signs on the bridge structure.

8. In response to the petitioners' requests, and following surveys and site inspections, a package of measures was proposed. A letter outlining these measures, together with a questionnaire, was sent to 65 properties along Blackhorse Road, Heath House Road and Berry Lane in early December 2003 asking for feedback by 19th December on a range of measures. A copy of this can be seen at Annex A. 24 responses were received and a number of residents attended a meeting at Brookwood Memorial Hall on 16th December 2003 to voice their opinions.
9. It can be seen that the original proposals were broadly similar to those listed below. There was generally support for most of the proposals; a reduction in speed limit was welcomed but a 30mph limit was preferred; vehicle activated signs were welcomed but some residents wanted speed limits to be displayed rather than a warning sign; additional street lighting was not well supported as it was felt that it would urbanise the area and have little impact on the dappling effect caused by trees and a low sun.
10. Additionally, several residents suggested that a roundabout should be installed at the crossroads. However, mini-roundabouts are not recommended for four-arm junctions and should only be used on roads with a 30mph speed limit. A large roundabout was also suggested but this would require a considerable amount of land currently outside the highway boundary. Consequently, a roundabout has not been considered as a practical and safe option.
11. **Proposed measures;**

Following the consultation exercise, a modified scheme has been designed, the chief differences being the removal of additional street lighting to the south of the crossroads and additional bridge height warning signs at the end of Heath House Road.

The modified scheme consists of;

- a reduction in speed limit over all of Blackhorse Road, Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road to 40mph. It should be noted that the latter two are subject to the results of the speed surveys, which will be reported orally at the Local Committee.
- an extension of the existing 30mph speed limit in Saunders Lane to its junction with Blackhorse Road.
- enhance the advanced signing of the railway bridge height in both imperial and metric units and the 7.5 tonne weight limit.
- extend the anti-skid surfacing on each approach to the crossroads on Blackhorse Road and into Heath House Road and Saunders Lane.
- change the requirement to Give Way at the crossroads to STOP. This cannot be undertaken automatically and an application to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) will have to be made. Given the poor sight lines at the junction, it is anticipated that the necessary authorisation will be given.
- improve the existing street lighting at the crossroads. Although many of the accidents at the crossroads have occurred during daylight hours, improving the street lighting at the crossroads should improve the overall safety at the junction.
- install a permanent vehicle-activated sign on Blackhorse Road approximately 150 metres in advance of each approach to the crossroads to give further warning of the junction to drivers. These signs would display a triangular sign warning of the crossroads with the legend SLOW DOWN beneath it. Department for Transport guidelines suggest that such warning signs should be set to operate at the 50th percentile speed measured before installation, which in this case would be 38mph.
- move the STOP line, if authorised by GOSE, at the end of Heath House Road further into Blackhorse Road to improve visibility. This could be achieved by removing the centre hatching and altering the kerb line on the southern approach to the junction.
- trim back vegetation on Blackhorse Road to improve visibility at the crossroads – to be carried out every 2 weeks during the growing season.
- trim back vegetation opposite The Gatehouse in Smarts Heath Road to improve visibility when exiting Blackhorse Road.

The proposed improvements are shown on Drawings No 11668, 11669 and 11670.

12. Since the consultation exercise and public meeting at Brookwood Memorial Hall, representation has been made for the installation of traffic signals at the junction. Consequently, this has not been the subject of wide discussion with the residents. Although, statistically, new traffic signals at locations such as this could introduce their own personal injury accidents, they might prevent many of the accidents that are occurring at the crossroads. In the past three years there have been 6 personal injury accidents at the crossroads, 5 of which have been due to drivers pulling away from Heath House Road, not having seen vehicles approaching along Blackhorse Road, mainly from the south. Residents may be concerned that signals will urbanise the road due to the numerous signal poles and the significant increase in the amount of street lighting that would be required. Additionally, if drivers' perception is that the junction has been improved and made safer by the introduction of signals, it could encourage greater use of the route as a "rat run" to avoid Brookwood Crossroads. Moving the STOP line further forward to give better sight lines should resolve the problem at considerably less expense than traffic signals.
13. During the last three years, there have been 3 personal injury collisions at the junction of Blackhorse Road, Berry Lane and Smarts Heath Road. All of these were slight and 2 were caused by vehicles emerging from Blackhorse Road into the path of vehicles on Berry Lane. The severity of these collisions suggests that speeds on Berry Lane were not high. Work has previously been carried out at this junction to improve sight lines although physical conditions limit what can be done, particularly when looking along Berry Lane. Looking along Smarts Heath Road, some additional vegetation trimming will improve sightlines and enhanced signing should increase driver awareness on both approaches to Blackhorse Road.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The cost of the proposals is estimated to be £40000, to be funded from the Local Committee's Local Transportation Plan capital expenditure. However, there is currently no allocation programmed for 2004 / 05.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

15. If approved, the proposal would improve the safety of the users of Blackhorse Road, Berry Lane and Heath House Road and help to keep over weight and over-height lorries from the area.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

16. There are no crime and disorder implications.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no equalities implications.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

18. There is a clear consensus from those residents that responded to the questionnaire that a lower speed limit is required along Blackhorse Road. A number of residents would like to see it reduced to 30mph but this would be unrealistically low, whereas a 40mph speed limit would be more reasonable. A contributory factor in many of the accidents occurring at the crossroads is the poor visibility when emerging from Heath House Road. A change from Give Way to STOP will indicate the need to take extra care at the junction and moving the STOP line slightly further forward will improve the sight lines. Permanent vehicle activated signs displaying a crossroads sign and SLOW DOWN and more anti-skid surfacing should reduce approach speeds on Blackhorse Road and provide added stopping ability should this be required. Improved advanced signage of the low railway bridge and the weight limit on the road will help to keep large vehicles out of the road and warn those seeking legitimate access of the limited available headroom at the bridge.

Report by: Stephen Child, Local Transportation Director, Woking.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Kevin Patching

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01483 518300

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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