

Joint Response
To Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council
Shared Space Consultation

Introduction

This joint consultation response has been prepared and submitted on behalf of the following organisations within Surrey:

- Surrey Disabled People's Partnership
- Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
- Alzheimer's Society
- Age UK Surrey (Formerly Age Concern Surrey)
- Surrey Independent Living Council
- Action For Carers Surrey
- Surrey Access Forum
- Surrey Association of Visual Impairment (SAVI)
- Surrey Deaf Forum
- Surrey LINK
- Social Information on Disability

The organisations above have also signed a Joint Statement 'Say No to Shared Surfaces' (appendix 1).

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. However, we have prepared a response that does not use the standard questionnaire document that has been issued as part of this consultation exercise. It is our view that this questionnaire does not give sufficient scope for respondents to give a full response to the issue of introducing a Shared Use area.

We wish to make the following points and ask that these points are given full consideration in any deliberations that are carried out.

Definition

There have been a number of terms used in describing the scheme which has permitted cyclists to use their cycles in pedestrian areas of Woking town centre, including the term 'Shared Space'. It is important to note that the 'Shared Space' website defines the shared space concept as the integration of traffic, pedestrians and other road users to reduce the dominance of vehicles on the roads and create a more social space.

This is achieved through traffic management methods proposed by the Hans Monderman model which rely on the design of the road, the environment around the road and the behavioural psychology these give to inform the driver that this is a social space and extra caution must be taken. The concept is flexible in its application, but there are key measures proposed such as the removal or reduction of traffic signs, markings and other instructions to drivers which prevents the road looking like a space designed for traffic. The concept taken to its fullest requires the removal of the separation between motorised vehicles and other road users, mainly through the removal of the traditional pavement and kerb.

It is claimed that this shift from the traditional 'separation and control' of pedestrians and vehicles to integration and shared space has the effect of creating caution and making drivers slow down. By giving back users responsibility for their own action, it is argued that this reduces accidents by 'making roads dangerous to make them safe'.

We acknowledge that the particular scheme in Woking town centre is not one that is described above. We also welcome the public statement made by Iain Reeve – Deputy Director of Transport – Surrey County Council, at the Public Meeting on February 21st, in which he stated that Surrey County Council were not planning to introduce such schemes and he would be personally concerned if such schemes were considered.

It is our view that the scheme introduced in Woking town centre is a Shared Use scheme which introduces an area whereby pedestrians and cyclist share facilities.

Cycle Woking Scheme

We wish to make clear that our organisations have and continue to welcome the status that Woking has as a 'Cycle Town'; and its aims to promote cycling to improve the health of citizens, of all ages and to reduce the number of car journeys taken. In addition to providing more facilities for cyclist such as cycle racks, advice centres and cycle safety training within local schools. We recognise the benefits such initiatives have on all of society and not just cyclists. Our concerns are specifically in regard to the introduction of Shared Use areas only.

Our Concerns

Our concerns and those of the citizens of Surrey we represent are as follows:

Woking has developed a well deserved reputation of being an accessible town for everyone including disabled people and those with reduced mobility including: older people and people with pushchairs, Woking Borough Council were the first Borough in Surrey to commission DisabledGO to assess the accessibility of facilities in the Borough and to provide this information for disabled people and others on the DisabledGO. The Borough has also been supportive of Woking Access Group for a number of years. These clear examples of good practice make the decision to introduce a Shared Use area in Woking even more difficult for us to understand. We sincerely feel that by introducing this scheme, Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council are in serious jeopardy of dismantling the excellent reputation Woking has as a town, where vulnerable pedestrians feel they can come and use the facilities independently and with confidence.

It is important to make clear that cyclist have the ability to dismount and walk their bikes the relatively short distance in the pedestrian area (less than 200m) through the centre of town, before they can mount their bikes again. This is an option that wheelchair, scooter and mobility aid users do not have. It is our view that the achievements made through the Cycle Woking project will not be lost, if the Shared Use scheme was withdrawn.

Many of our service users and members have made clear to us that they feel that they would not be confident in using Woking town centre independently if the Shared Use scheme is allowed to continue.

The following are a sample of just a few of the comments we have received from people who are concerned by the introduction of the Shared Use scheme in Woking town centre;

“As a member of the visually impaired community, I have to be on the side of caution and take the non supportive view. I feel it is wrong to allow cyclists, of any age or disposition, to freely roam these areas. Most people just do NOT understand what it is like to get about with a sight impairment. especially a severe one, or indeed, a total loss of vision. A visually impaired person may not necessarily be identifiable by the cyclist, as not all of us use a white stick or cane. But for all of us, eye contact with a cyclist is impossible and could lead to misunderstandings upon passing, leading to the inevitable collision, for example. This is further compounded the older a sight impaired person becomes, less able to quickly avoid the collision. For a totally blind person using a white stick or cane, there is an even worse potential problem. This is the way

that the white stick or cane swing from side to side to make sure that the way ahead is clear of obstruction. It is feasible that a cyclist, that may not be paying attention, passing from behind could snare the sweeping stick or cane and a nasty accident ensue. One can only imagine the potential consequences of such an accident. I do applaud the use of cycles over cars wherever possible, but SURELY the disabled community as a whole, deserves a tiny, important area within their town, where they can relax, free in the knowledge, that a potential problem with a moving vehicle is not an issue? Woking is an enlightened multi cultural, forward thinking community. Let it also be an enlightened multi physical impairment aware community too! I believe Woking should lead, not follow. The Council must have the foresight and courage to encompass all its citizen's needs. Sometimes a minority should be given priority over the majority". (David – Woking)

"Sharing footpaths in Woking Town Centre sends shivers down my spine. Pedestrians are not in an aware state like they are when crossing roads. I have a mobility scooter and I have to be very aware of people around me and notice how people wonder, stray over a large area and suddenly stop, when they are shopping. People are normally talking to someone or are in groups and talking so are not consciously aware. Children have a free reign in pedestrian areas, they jump skip and run backwards and forwards to their guardians, they will never have this freedom again if cycles are permitted in the pedestrian areas, I can see some serious accidents happening. People who are blind, hard of hearing and the frail elderly won't stand a chance, you feel safe in a pedestrian area you're never going to notice cyclist. I hate cyclist coming up behind me, I have no idea which side of me they are going to pass so I freeze then get the verbal abuse because they have to brake. The canal path is already shared and pedestrians are always being hindered by cyclist, the pedestrians are the ones that have to give way and when there are so many passing all the time you're constantly stopping and moving over for them, never the cyclist for us pedestrians". (Sharon – Woking)

"This is a ridiculous plan. Bikes are road vehicles. If the roads aren't safe enough for cyclists, then they should think about making them so, instead of passing the danger onto Pedestrians". (Rosie – Byfleet)

"The town centre and canal side path in Woking are not suitable for a shared use scheme with cyclists. The paths involved are not wide

enough. Wheelchairs, Buggies, People on mobiles, coffee shop tables, market stalls and many other user groups use Woking town centre. There is no room for cyclists. End of". (Andrew – Woking)

"I am against the shared use surfaces due to the safety, specifically, of disabled people and the elderly as well as members of the public generally as cyclists are sometimes not considerate of other people. This is especially true of teenagers who ride their bikes quite fast and often aren't looking where they are going (especially if they are with their friends). It is often difficult for disabled people and the elderly particularly to move out of the way quickly. This means it is more likely that accidents could happen - some of which could have extremely serious consequences" (Julie – Woking)

"Shared surfaces are a bad idea! I have MS and this often makes me unsteady on my feet. I wouldn't be able to move out of the way if a bike was coming towards me. I also have poor hearing. I don't have a problem with cyclist but they shouldn't be allowed on paths!" (Alan – Woking)

"I feel strongly that cyclists should get off and walk in pedestrianised areas. As well as the obvious dangers for people with physical or sensory disabilities, mothers with small children will have problems. They should be able to relax a bit in pedestrian areas, knowing their children are safe. If this project goes ahead in Woking then the general belief that it's 'all right' to cycle in pedestrian areas will spread and we will find more people cycling through pedestrian areas in other towns even though the change has not been made there. We should also resist the general tendency of highway engineers to lump cyclists and pedestrians together (to the great discomfort of both) instead of making proper provision for cyclists on the roads. All best wishes." (Ann – Staines)

"I have lived in Woking all my life, and have seen its transition into a town that has made disability a priority, having historically listened to disabled people about what they need in their town. Because of this, as a visual and hearing impaired person, I have had sufficient confidence to

be able to independently navigate it's streets without too much fear of injury. This confidence has now been severely dented, as I now fear being hit by a fast moving cyclist, in areas I should expect to be able to safely walk in. I will not only be able to see approaching cyclists, but I won't hear them either...worse still, they won't know this! Nine out of ten cyclists are probably extremely conscientious and safety minded...I worry about the tenth". (Simon – Woking)

As the comments above clearly show, the introduction of the Shared Use area will have a severe impact on a wide range of people and not just disabled people.

We fully acknowledge that cyclist have legitimate concerns in being unable to cycle safely on many roads. This can be due to a number of reasons including poorly maintained roads, inadequate or no cycle lanes and inconsiderate drivers. However, we strongly feel that allowing cyclist to use pedestrian areas, such as in Woking town centre, will transfer the issue of safety in regarding to pedestrians and cyclists. We are of the opinion that Surrey County Council, as the local authority responsible for highways has a duty to implement schemes that will allow cyclist to be confident and safe whilst using roads across Surrey. It would appear, in our view, that this scheme has been introduced as a 'quick fix' option rather than giving proper consideration to the issue of cyclist's safety on the roads.

Other Schemes

We have often heard supporters of introducing the Shared Use area saying that similar schemes have been introduced in other parts of the UK without any concerns. We dispute this and are aware of areas where having cyclist and pedestrians sharing areas has caused concern. An example is the Queen Street area of Cardiff. This is a pedestrian shopping area where an 18 month trial was introduced to allow cyclist to use their bikes in this area. Following a large number of concerns raised by the public and representative groups, the trial was ended and cyclists are now required to dismount from their bikes and push them through this area.

Another 'Cycle Town' which has plans to introduce Shared Use areas is Colchester, Essex. Concerns around safety for pedestrians have been raised by local citizens, Councillors and Colchester Friends of the Earth

We are also aware through communications with other organisations representing vulnerable people across other areas of the UK, that there

is a high level of concern around introducing Shared Use facilities and the types of impact this could have on some of the most vulnerable members of society.

It is important to note that it is often the case that surveys of pedestrians in areas where Shared Use areas have been introduced may not highlight a large number of concerns, as the vulnerable people who have concerns no longer use the area where the scheme has been introduced.

Duty of Care

All local authorities are covered by the **Disability Equality Duty (DED)** and the **Equality Act 2010**. The DED was set up to ensure that all public bodies pay promote equality for disabled people in every area of their work and is designed so that the needs of disabled people are central to any planning process a local authority undertakes. Furthermore, the Equalities Act requires local authorities to make adjustments to designs, plans and functions to make sure that disabled people are not disadvantaged by them. It is our view that Surrey County Council have shown disregard in this matter. It was only at the insistence of Surrey Disabled People's Partnership that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out by Surrey County Council. This was done after the pilot scheme had been introduced rather than at the planning stage.

Conclusion

To summarise;

- We are urging the Woking Local Committee to withdraw the relevant Traffic Order which allows cycling in any of the pedestrian areas of Woking town centre including; Town Square, Commercial Way, and Gloucester Walk.
- That any plans to introduce Segregated Space for cyclist (using a white line) will be a safe option. This will not be a barrier to prevent cyclist and pedestrians crossing in to each other's area.
- We wish Surrey County Council to give an undertaking that they will ensure that full and through consultation processes are carried out for any future proposals to introduce Shared Surface and Shared Use schemes in Surrey. This process should begin at the concept point of any scheme. These consultations should involve a wide range of representative groups to ensure the views of disabled and older people and others are sought.

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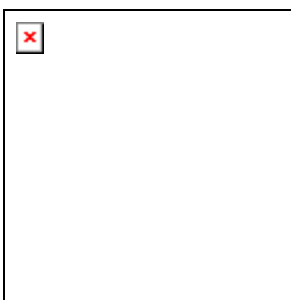
Appendix A

**Say NO to Shared Surfaces
Joint Statement**

The pedestrian environment must be inclusive and safe for all users.

Shared surface streets, often introduced as part of a 'shared space' approach - in which the footway, kerb and pedestrian crossings are removed and replaced with a shared surface street design that promotes motor vehicles and cycles sharing the same area as pedestrians. This presents particular access and safety issues for disabled people as well as many others.

We support the campaign for streets and public spaces that are accessible to all members of the community. In particular, we call on Surrey County Council and Borough Councils across Surrey to place a moratorium on all shared surface street schemes, until a full and transparent consultation process is carried out with citizens of Surrey and representative organisations.



Surrey Deaf Forum