

Consultation on Egham High Street by Surrey County Council – Observations by Egham Chamber of Commerce

The following note was considered by the Egham Chamber of Commerce

Background

The Egham High Street consultation sets out two potential options for the future of the High Street that in essence say:

Option 1 – Retain current part traffic free regime – but with more emphasis on enforcing the restrictions

Option 2 Remove the pedestrian zone, keep one way system and have 30 minutes parking.

The following issues about the current car free periods are noted both by the consultation documents and from general comment.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Creates a good environment for pedestrians by removing noise, air pollution and traffic movement	Lack of passing trade for businesses for 5 hours is viewed as having a negative impact on business viability
Many businesses have outside eating areas (even in winter) that benefit for the car free periods	Problem with trade deliveries during car free periods
The lunchtime period is very pedestrian busy with Strode's students (some 1300), employees and residents given a vibrant feel to the town and benefitting from the car free environment	Barrier not properly administered which creates uncertainty about the car free concept. Access from the east end of High Street causes some problems
	Problems of access for those with mobility or disability difficulties

Comment

There has been much debate about the value, impact and effectiveness of the current car free periods. The current operation does have its operational flaws but these can be remedied. The lack of passing trade and trade delivery is seen as an obstacle/obstruction to business activity. What does stand out with the current system is that at times it works well and at others it is neutral in its impact.

The recent arrival of the Waitrose store will have an impact on the dynamic of the town but this will need to be reviewed in due course and reflected in the final outcome of the consultation. The Egham Chamber hope that it will bring positive benefits by bringing more business to the town particularly in the lunch hour period.

What is clear is that for certain parts of the current car free period the amount of footfall in the High street is low (11am to 11.30 and from 3pm to 4pm). However, from 12 noon to 3pm the amount of pedestrian movement is high – with many (including a large number of the 1300 Strode's students

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even in winter) lingering in the High Street to eat and drink. The outside street cafes become very busy and there is a vibrancy about the town.

It may therefore be a compromise solution between the business voice and the other users to review the operation of the car free period to reflect the actual activity in the High Street and the benefits of a car free environment. This has the potential to benefit both the pedestrians and businesses alike. If the core hours were revised from 11.30am to 3pm this would go some way to meet the business needs whilst retain the benefits for pedestrians during the busy periods (when the businesses benefit from the lunchtime trade).

In tandem with this would be a need to improve enforcement of the entry barrier and the suggestion of a controlled barrier (Safer Runnymede?) allowing exempted access during the controlled times. Also an access solution for those with mobility difficulties could be explored.

Resolution of Egham Chamber of Commerce:

The Egham Chamber of Commerce wish to comment on the Egham High Street consultation by Surrey County Council as follows:

- The car free period in the High Street be revised as follows Monday to Sunday from 11.30am to 3pm
- The barrier be replaced with a more sophisticated system (raising bollards) with possible offsite control placed in the hands of Runnymede BC (Safer Runnymede) if practicable. Access for exempt vehicles to be allowed with a smart card?
- Explore methods for preventing access to the eastern end of the High Street (raised teeth allowing only egress from the west)
- Better enforcement of the parking regime once the new system is in place
- Access for those with mobility and disability difficulties be reviewed