

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)



DATE: WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2015
LEAD OFFICER: SARAH SMITH, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND COMMITTEE OFFICER
SUBJECT: WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
DIVISION: ALL

Question from Mr Richard Banks

Last year I submitted a complaint (co16461) to Surrey CC. Having gone through all the procedures including the Ombudsman this has still not been resolved.

The complaint was regarding the changes to the road layout at the junction of Mill Lane with the A 217 at Hookwood near the Black Horse Pub. The reason given for the change was to prevent vehicles from doing U turns after turning left. It has failed to do this and vehicles just drive a bit further up the road and use the entrance to the car parking business on the right hand side to do the turn.

This leaves us with a junction that is a potential death trap. Traffic approaches Mill Lane from the right from a slight incline and a bend in the road. Because of the angle of the new junction it is difficult to turn your head to the right to get a safe view of oncoming traffic. The case has been taken up by local MP Crispin Blunt.

My question is – ‘What is being done to improve visibility and safety at this dangerous junction?’

Response from SCC Road Safety Team:

Introduction

The safety of the junction of the A217 Reigate Road and D336 Mill Lane was investigated in 2013 by a team including Surrey Police traffic management and road safety team, the county council’s local area highway engineering colleagues and the county council’s safety engineering team. The junction was investigated due to safety concerns being raised by local people via Hookwood Parish Council and a continuing history of collisions that had been taking place at this site, primarily involving illegal U-turns.

The problem exists because drivers exiting Mill Lane wishing to ultimately travel north (towards Reigate) are directed to travel south instead and circulate the A217 Reigate Road / C62 Reigate Road roundabout. It would appear that some drivers are unwilling to travel the extra distance to perform this manoeuvre and instead were completing illegal U-turns at the southern end of the central traffic island. This had resulted in a number of collisions involving U-turning vehicles and northbound or southbound vehicles on the A217. A number of collision reduction measures had already been installed in the past to try to address this problem, but collisions were still taking place:

- In the early 2000s hatched markings and lane markings and standard “No U-turn” signs were installed.
- Two enhanced “No U-turn” signs (with yellow backing) were installed in 2009.

Proposals

Following the investigation the following suggestions were discounted:

- A substantial junction improvement (such as providing a roundabout), would be prohibitively expensive.
- Extending the central reserve further south would remove right turn access into resident's driveways, and may still not deter the illegal u-turn manoeuvre.
- The police would endeavour to give this site additional enforcement attention. However drivers are unlikely to perform an illegal manoeuvre in front of a visible police presence and it is unlikely that there would be sufficient police resources to be present at this site frequently enough to deter illegal U-turns and so this was not considered a long term solution.

The following suggestions were taken forward:

- The nearside kerbs of the A217 directly to the south of Mill Lane should be re-aligned to reduce the southbound lane width in order to deter illegal U-turn manoeuvres.
- Narrowing the road in this way would also help reduce vehicle speeds through the junction.
- Amending the entry from Mill Lane would remove problems of vehicles exiting Mill Lane and forcing a merge with southbound traffic rather than giving way.
- At the point of the illegal U-turn manoeuvre, double height kerbs could be installed to deter vehicles swinging to the nearside and then across to perform a U-turn.
- A review of the speed limit through the junction to the roundabout would also be undertaken to consider reducing the existing 50 mph limit to 40 mph.

Subsequently the junction improvements were completed in March 2014, and a change in speed limit from 50 mph to 40 mph took place in November 2014.

Evaluation

The following Table 1 summarises the number of collisions resulting in personal injury and recorded by the police in the five year period before compared with the one year period after the scheme was implemented (the most recent data available is to the end of March 2015). Collisions that result in damage only and do not result in injury are not systematically recorded by the police and are not included within this data.

Table 1: Number of personal injury collisions recorded by the police

Period		Number of collisions at junction (those involving illegal u-turns shown in brackets)			
	Dates	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
Before	1/4/2009 to 31/03/2014 (5 years)	-	4 (3)	5 (3)	9 (6)
After	1/4/2014 to 31/03/2015 (1 year)	-	-	3 (1)	3 (1)

It can be seen from Table 1 that prior to the scheme there were nine collisions in five years (an average of 1.8 collisions per year), and four of these resulted in serious injury. Six of the nine collisions were thought to involve illegal u-turns (1.2 per year), with three of these resulting in serious injury.

In the one year after the scheme was built there have been three collisions resulting in slight injury. One of these involved an attempted illegal u-turn and the other two involved shunts

between vehicles on Mill Lane queuing to turn onto the A217. This shows that the number and severity of collisions involving illegal u-turns appears to have been reduced, though not completely eradicated. The total number of collisions has not reduced, though an after period of only one year has elapsed so far. It is usual in road safety engineering to consider an after period of at least 3 years.

The following Table 2 summarises speed survey results in the periods before and after the scheme was built.

Table 2: Speed survey results on the A217 in the vicinity of the Mill Lane Junction

Direction	Mean Average Speed (mph)		
	Before	After	Change
Southbound	46	40	-6 mph

It can be seen from Table 2 that the reduction in speed limit from 50 mph to 40 mph along with the narrowing of the road in the southbound direction has resulted in mean average speeds reducing by 6mph (from 46mph to 40 mph) in the southbound direction.

Site observations

A “stage 3” safety audit was undertaken on 23 May 2014. This involved a site visit by road safety engineering and police specialists to review the scheme following construction to identify any potential road safety hazards arising from the changes to the road layout. The colleagues undertaking this audit were made aware of the complaint regarding the changes in visibility for drivers exiting Mill Lane and took care especially to consider this issue. Following investigation no concerns were raised by the auditors regarding this issue.

In light of the question submitted to the local committee above, and in response to a previous request from the local member, a further site visit was undertaken by colleagues in the county council's road safety engineering team and local area highways team on 18 May 2015 to consider again the visibility for vehicles exiting Mill Lane. It is acknowledged that as a result of the new scheme drivers are more likely to need to stop and then turn their head to the right a little more at the give way line rather than proceeding down the slip lane in the old layout and then relying upon their wing mirror to try to merge into the southbound traffic. While this may be considered less convenient by some drivers, this is not considered to be especially hazardous. Indeed one of the serious collisions taking place on the old layout was associated with a vehicle merging out of the slip road into the path of a southbound vehicle. The visibility splay (measured in accordance with TD 42/95 Geometric Design of Major/Minor Priority Junctions) was also checked. This showed that the visibility splay between vehicles at the new give way line and southbound vehicles is approximately 140m, whereas the visibility splay from the old give way line was approximately 95m.

Conclusion

A highway safety scheme to address a history of collisions primarily involving illegal U-turns was implemented at this site in March 2014. There is an insufficient after period to yet be confident of the collision reduction success of the scheme, however data so far shows a reduction in the number and severity of collisions involving illegal U-turns. Speed surveys show that the scheme has also reduced the speed of vehicles travelling through the junction which also helps to reduce the risk of collision and the consequences of any collisions. While it is acknowledged that some drivers may find it less convenient to have to turn their head more to exit Mill Lane rather than using the old slip road layout to merge into the southbound traffic lane, this is not considered more hazardous. Concern that the junction is now much more dangerous as a result of the scheme is not borne out by the number of collisions taking place at the junction after the scheme was introduced. The visibility splay has also been

increased as a result of the new scheme. It is recommended that the county council's road safety team and Surrey police continue to monitor the number of collisions taking place at this site to check whether the scheme is successful in reducing casualties over a longer time period. Surrey Police's Road Safety and Traffic Management team have been consulted and support the response presented here.

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Questions from Peter Seaward on behalf of the Bookham Residents Association

Could we please have an update from SCC Highways on progress towards solutions for:

- The designated Wet Spot at the south end of Dorking Road, at the junction with the Polesden Lacey access road, Chapel Lane and Admirals Road.
- The flooding issues on Lower Road, Bookham between East Street and the High Street.
- Flood problems at the north western corner of the Lower Road Recreation Ground, where twin culverts pass under Lower Road.

Response from Surrey Highways:

Unfortunately the original proposal, to build a swale to contain surface water in times of heavy rain, is no longer feasible. It is now proposed to construct new soakaways within different 3rd party land which has been agreed in principle. The number of additional soakaways will be determined following tests to determine the suitability of the underlying chalk. It is also proposed to carry out extensive drainage maintenance over 2-3 months which will include cleaning and testing of the existing soakaways to increase capacity further. The works are currently programmed to be undertaken in the spring of next year and to be completed by the end of March, subject to weather and the necessary permits.

The areas where there has been highway flooding are prioritised for inclusion in the capital drainage programme of works. Unfortunately, the two locations on Lower Road, that have had some works in the past, are not on the programme for this financial year. However, these locations will be reviewed for increased routine maintenance.

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Displacement parking close to the High Street in Bookham is creating problems in specific roads in the centre of the village, especially in Fife Way. Here inconsiderate parking is inconveniencing the residents.

Would SCC parking officers agree to meet the residents to discuss what options if any could be introduced by SCC Highways to alleviate the issues raised by these people.

The Bookham Retail and Business Association has agreed to join any such meeting to see if they can help, as some of the displacement parking is caused by business and retail staff working in the vicinity.

Response from SCC Parking:

Yes, this is not a problem - we can certainly arrange to meet. Taking into account the fact that the site work for the next review does not take place until December of this year, there is plenty of time to arrange a meeting.

Question from Mr Clayton Wellman on behalf of Chart Downs' residents, users of the No.22 Saturday service and the local Liberal Democrat team.

A local petition calling for the retention of the Saturday bus service on route 22 has been signed by over 140 people from the Chart Downs area alone. Many of the signatories have reported why they find the current service is "difficult to use" – including an irregular timetable, unreliable time-keeping and lack of real-time information on delays. We have previously received similar feedback on other subsidised services, such as the 516 via Box Hill and Headley where passengers have been stranded by the non-appearance of the last service of the day. What standards does the County Council place on its service providers to meet these basic aspects of service provision and how does it monitor the operators' adherence to these requirements?

Response from SCC Travel and Transport:

Recent survey data on Metrobus service 22 indicates an average usage from Chart Downs as being 2 passengers per Saturday. The latest service reliability statistics from Metrobus for May 2015 indicate that journeys on the Saturday service 22 were on average operating 83.5% on time with some journeys operating up to 8 minutes late.

Metrobus service 22 is included on the Surrey real time passenger information (RTPI) system. There has been some recent disruption to the availability of live information for Metrobus services due to issues Metrobus have had with their scheduling software to supply the electronic service data for the Surrey RTPI system. However, scheduled information is still available on electronic signs at stops.

Electronic signs at individual stops are only one means of providing real time bus information to passengers. Real time bus information is also available via mobile phones and the internet using the Traveline Nextbuses service provided in partnership with Surrey County Council. This is particularly convenient for getting the latest service information for your bus without needing to be standing at the bus stop, and will be the same information that would be displayed on any signs installed at the stops. Details of how to use the Nextbuses service are on the Traveline website (www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk).

These web and mobile phone channels present a very cost effective way to provide real time bus information to the public and are used alongside the signs on the street to provide a range of information sources for bus passengers. Further relevant information on current RTPI developments in Surrey can be found on the Surrey County Council website, using this link <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/buses>.

The County Councils conditions of contract set out the operational requirements that all operators must adhere to. These conditions stipulate, that the contractor shall at all times during the contract period perform the services comprehensively with due skill, care and diligence strictly in accordance and in compliance with the scheduled timetable. The Contractor's performance is monitored by the Council and is measured on the level of compliance against the scheduled timetable and service specification. Officers achieve this

by initiating spot checks from Surrey County Council Inspectors, using Operators self declarations of lost mileage, requesting RTPI systems data, analysing operators ticket machine data and also by receiving reports from members of the public. All of these measures are used to assist officers in measuring compliance with the service specification. Service reviews and continuous improvement discussions take place throughout the contract period allowing the opportunity to scrutinise and review all aspects of the activities and performance while developing and agreeing proposals for achieving continuous improvements or for preventing failures. Issues which are outstanding and or require review are discussed to ensure total compliance by the Contractor with any monitoring arrangements.

When contracted services operate unreliably, for reasons deemed within the operator's control, financial deductions can be imposed against the operator.

Complaints regarding unreliable operations should be addressed to the Local Bus Team within the Travel & Transport Group, e-mail passenger.transport@surreycc.gov.uk