

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (TANDRIDGE)

DATE: 26 June 2015

SUBJECT: Formal Public Question – Request for safe crossing point on A25 Oxted near West Hill Bank

DIVISION: OXTED



Richard and Katie Lewis ask:

We have recently built a new fully accessible house on West Hill Bank located just off the A25 (the first road on the right past the petrol station when heading from Godstone to Oxted) for our wheelchair bound daughter. As a family we love walking in to Oxted together and have recently helped secure two new accessible pieces of play equipment for Master Park and are looking forward to making the short walk to the park. Currently there is no pavement on the West Hill Bank side of the road as the road narrows significantly meaning access to the underpass by the petrol station is impossible. Therefore the safest way to Oxted involves crossing the A25, straight across to the pavement on the other side.

However as our daughter is wheelchair bound she is unable to mount the pavement on the other side of the road. Logically we thought that a dropped kerb would be the safest and simplest solution. Only to be advised by the Surrey Highways team that “we are not prepared to install a dropped kerb to assist your daughter to cross the A25 at a location that we consider to be unsafe”. Whilst I appreciate that this may not be the safest road crossing point in Oxted, it is the only road crossing point available to us and the safest of all the options available. There are currently 5 children under the age of 5 living on West Hill Bank, many of whom still regularly use push chairs and without a dropped kerb it makes it a very dangerous for parents to cross the road in order to walk the 10 mins in to Oxted. Whilst I understand that certain guidelines are put in place to make our roads a safer place, common sense has to prevail when the risk of doing nothing is far greater than the risk of doing something.

There was recently a traffic accident just outside of this junction and the highway authority’s inability to act risks putting children’s and parents lives at risk. There are a number of measures that could be implemented to improve road safety at this junction could you please explain why none are being considered? On the basis no measures are implemented could you please suggest how a wheelchair user should cross the road from West Hill Bank without risking being involved in a road traffic accident?

Response:

The A25 through Oxted is part of the principal road network and forms part of the M25 diversion route between Godstone and Sevenoaks. The road carries a significant volume of traffic including HGVs. There is one footway on the West Hill section of the A25, on the north side of the carriageway opposite West Hill Bank. The speed limit of the A25 West Hill is 40mph.

A review of recorded personal injury collisions in the vicinity of West Hill Bank over the past three years shows that there have been 3 collisions. Two of these were at the junction of

West Hill and Church Lane, related to turning movements which resulted in slight injury. The third collision was between Church Lane and West Hill Bank where a vehicle hit a pedestrian resulting in serious injury.

The visibility on the A25 at West Hill Bank is significantly restricted, both by the geometry of the road and the brow of West Hill. Officers have serious concerns that the restricted visibility at West Hill Bank means that crossing the A25 at this location is unsafe. Unfortunately there are no changes that could be made within the existing highway extents that would significantly improve visibility at this location. The installation of a dropped kerb on the footway opposite West Hill Bank as Mr and Mrs Lewis request, would suggest that this is a safe place to cross the A25, and officers do not consider this to be the case. For this reason there are no plans to install a dropped kerb in the footway opposite West Hill Bank.

A site meeting was held with representatives from the Area Highways Office, the Road Safety and Traffic Management Team at Surrey Police and Surrey's Road Safety Team. After the meeting the police representative made the following comments in writing:

"From the West Hill Bank side of the road it is possible to get a good view to the left (towards Godstone) but the same cannot be said from the Sevenoaks direction. Vehicles from this direction are emerging over the brow of a hill and are descending down the hill towards the West Hill bank junction. Timings of vehicles travelling at the speed limit showed that they reached the junction within 5-6 seconds from the point where they would first see someone crossing.

From the pavement on the opposite side of the road (opposite West Hill Bank), the visibility is seriously restricted in both directions. Cutting back the trees and foliage might improve the view towards Godstone, but this foliage is supporting a steep embankment at this point. The view from this point towards Sevenoaks is even more restricted and is wholly inadequate.

On more than one occasion whilst undertaking this site visit, I had to run across the road at this point, having been caught out by vehicles emerging over the brow of the hill and as an experienced road safety and traffic enforcement officer, I did not feel completely safe crossing the road at this point. Installing a dropped kerb might suggest to the public that this is a suitable place to cross the road and I cannot agree with that suggestion."

At the meeting other options were also considered that would assist pedestrians crossing the A25 at West Hill Bank. The restricted visibility and lack of footway on the south side of the road mean that a pedestrian crossing would not be appropriate at this location. The installation of a pedestrian refuge island in the centre of the road was also considered. Current guidance states that pedestrian refuge islands should be at least 1.6m in width, preferably 2.0m, to cater for wheelchair users. It is not possible to provide this width of island, and the waiting area that would be required on the south side of the carriageway, within the existing highway boundary.

Whilst officers have every sympathy with Mr and Mrs Lewis's concerns about crossing the A25 they cannot recommend the installation of a dropped kerb in the footway opposite West Hill Bank and unfortunately there are no other feasible options.

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