

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



LOCAL COMMITTEE (SURREY HEATH)

DATE: 4 OCTOBER 2018

SUBJECT: UPPER CHOBHAM ROAD – REQUEST FOR CONTROLLED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

DIVISION: HEATHERSIDE AND PARKSIDE

PETITION DETAILS:

A petition has been received from parents of pupils at Ravenscote Junior School requesting the introduction of either a pelican crossing or a zebra crossing in Upper Chobham Road. The online petition had 1,575 signatures at the time this response was prepared.

The petition states the following:

“There has been a school crossing patrol or 'lollipop lady' on the very busy Upper Chobham Road outside Ravenscote Junior School intermittently, we now have no crossing patrol and it's proving difficult to fill because it's a very dangerous road. There is no pedestrian or pelican crossing anywhere along this road, so the lollipop lady has been the sole method of ensuring safe passage across the road for hundreds of children of all ages every day.

This 30mph road is extremely busy, especially at times of morning and afternoon school runs and visibility is poor due to many cars parked along the road.

Since the start of term (SEP18) there has been many car accidents, one resulting in a parent needing A&E attention.

Requested Action

We, the undersigned, do hereby request that a pelican or zebra crossing is installed on the Upper Chobham Road outside Ravenscote Junior School as soon as possible.

The Council understandably has to make cut-backs, but we urge that these are not carried out to the exclusion of our children's safety. We are very worried that it will take the injury or even death of a child, before our concerns are heeded.”

RESPONSE:

Background

Ravenscote Junior School teaches children aged from 7 to 11 (years 3 to 6) and has over 600 pupils. The school is located between Upper Chobham Road and Old Bisley Road in Frimley as indicated on the plan attached below.

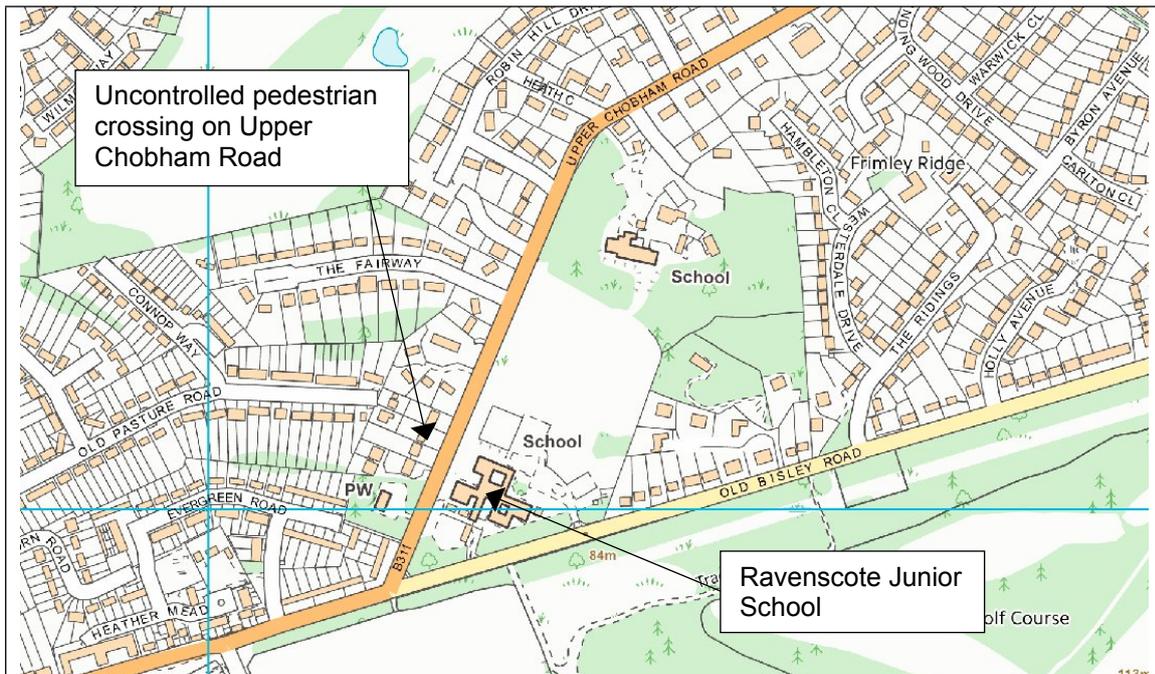


Figure 1 – Location Plan

Vehicular access to the school is from Old Bisley Road. However, the main pedestrian access to the school is on Upper Chobham Road (marked on the above plan). The majority of pupils enter and exit the school via this access.

A large number of pupils and parents cross Upper Chobham Road next to the access to the school where there is an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing point (shown in the photograph below) with dropped kerbs and tactile paving as well as pedestrian guard railing on either side of the road.

Previously, a school crossing patrol officer helped parents and children cross Upper Chobham Road at this uncontrolled crossing point. However, the officer left at the end of the summer term in 2018 and a replacement has not been recruited as yet. As a result, parents and children have had to cross Upper Chobham Road without any assistance since the start of the new school year in September 2018.



Figure 2 – Uncontrolled crossing point on Upper Chobham Road

In response to concerns previously raised over the safety of children arriving and leaving Ravenscote Junior School, a detailed road safety assessment was undertaken in 2014 and the findings were presented to the Surrey Heath Local Committee. A copy of the report is attached.

Measure previously introduced to improve safety on Upper Chobham Road

Upper Chobham Road has already benefitted from significant investment to improve road safety and accessibility for pedestrians. Measures previously introduced include the following:

- A new footway was constructed on the eastern side of the road (resulting in footways at least 1.8 m wide on both sides of the road).
- Reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph in January 2013 (between the junctions with Old Bisley Road and Prior Road)
- School flashing wigwag lights on both approaches to crossing point where the school crossing patrol previously operated.
- School keep clear markings on both sides of the crossing point which prohibit stopping from 8.15 to 9.15am and from 2.30 to 4.00pm between Monday and Friday.
- Two vehicle activated signs (one on each side of the road to the north of the school entrance) were installed in July 2013. These illuminate to remind drivers of the 30 mph speed limit if they are travelling too fast.
- Signs to warn drivers to expect to encounter children going to and from school and to warn of school crossing patrol that previously operated. These signs have been placed on a bright yellow coloured backing boards to make them as conspicuous as possible.

- Double yellow lines (restricting waiting at all times) were installed in September 2017 on the north side of Upper Chobham Road from the mini roundabout junction with Chobham Road to the junction with The Fairway. Double yellow lines were also installed on the south side of Upper Chobham Road from the mini roundabout junction with Chobham Road up as far as the school entrance.

Further Measures Proposed

The road safety outside schools assessment undertaken in 2014 recommended that a proposal to introduce a road table at the uncontrolled crossing point, together with a pair of speed cushions on either approach, was added to the list of schemes for the Surrey Heath Local Committee to consider funding in future.

The Local Committee subsequently agreed a detailed design should be prepared for the proposal as part of its 2016/17 programme of works and the design was completed. However, the measures have not been introduced because the estimated cost of the scheme exceeds the total annual budget currently received by the Local Committee for delivering highways improvement schemes.

Analysis of Road Safety and Vehicle Speeds

We do not have any recent speed survey data for Upper Chobham Road (historic data is included in the attached report). However, site observations suggest speeds are generally very low at school drop off and pick up periods due to the high levels of parking and pedestrian activity at these times.

The road safety record has been checked for the period from January 2015 to July 2018 (latest available data). Over this time there have been no collisions involving injuries to children in the area of Upper Chobham Road near the school. However, a 15 year old pedestrian (and an adult pedestrian) received slight injuries when they were struck by a vehicle at the roundabout at the junction of Upper Chobham Road and Prior Road at 8.35am on 16 May 2016. Given the location of the collision, it is unlikely to have been avoided even if there was a zebra crossing or signalised crossing near the school (and the school crossing patrol officer would have been operating at this time).

Parking Enforcement

Surrey Heath Borough Council have a limited number of parking enforcement officers available and they have 30 schools to visit. Schools with higher priority issues such as Ravenscote receive more frequent visits than some other schools.

Parking enforcement officers generally visit Upper Chobham Road approximately once a week at school times. Since May 2018 the location has received 19 visits.

Weekly enforcement statistics are published on the following webpage:

<https://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/ParkSmart>

Options for helping pedestrians cross Upper Chobham Road

Below is an assessment of the different options that could be considered to help pedestrian cross Upper Chobham Road next to the school access:

(a) Zebra or signalised crossing

In response to the concerns raised by parents, specialist road safety officers from the County Council and Surrey Police undertook a site visit during the morning school drop off period on 21 September 2018. The lead petitioner spoke to Officers at the time of the meeting.

Observations from the site meeting indicate that a large number of parents and children cross Upper Chobham Road over a relatively short period of time (and the crossing movements will generally be even more concentrated in the afternoon when children exit the school at the same time). If a zebra crossing were introduced in such circumstances, it is likely that once pedestrians start crossing they would establish priority and a significant number of pedestrians would then potentially cross in a continuous flows. This would result in lengthy delays for motorists leading to driver frustration. As such, it was concluded that a signalised pedestrian crossing would be more appropriate since pedestrians would then cross in groups with gaps in between when vehicles would be able to proceed. This would therefore give a better balance between pedestrian and vehicle flows.

A signalised pedestrian crossing could potentially be introduced without any additional measures. However, it could also be introduced in conjunction with the road table and speed cushions previously proposed. These measures would help improve safety by reducing speeds on the approaches to the crossing which could be located on the road table.

The cost of introducing a signalised crossing in isolation would be approximately £100,000. The cost of introducing the crossing together with the road table and speed cushions would be approximately £130,000.

At present there is no funding allocated to allow either option to be progressed and the estimated costs significantly exceed the total annual capital budget of £36,363 currently received by the Surry Heath Local Committee. As such, an alternative source of funding would need to be identified to enable either option to be introduced. Officers are therefore currently investigating all potential sources of funding (such as developer contributions).

Even if a source of funding could be identified in the near future, it would still take a considerable amount of time (typically at least 12 months) before a signalised crossing could be introduced and be operational. This is because there are various elements of works that need to be completed (such as detail design, legal processes etc) before the crossing could be constructed and commissioned. As such, a new signalised crossing would only provide a solution in the longer term.

(b) Pedestrian Island

It would not be possible to provide an island of sufficient width without widening the road. Even if costly road widening works were undertaken, it would be difficult to provide an island of adequate size to allow large groups of pedestrians to wait safely in the centre of the road. Whilst an island would allow pedestrians to cross each direction of flow separately, they would still have to wait for gaps in the traffic. As such, a pedestrian island is not considered an appropriate option.

(c) Recruitment of a new School Crossing Patrol Officer or parent volunteers

In the short term, the only appropriate option that can be identified to help parents and children cross at the uncontrolled crossing point is the recruitment of a new school crossing patrol officer. However, it has not been possible to recruit anyone to the post as yet. In the circumstances, a group of parents could alternatively volunteer to be trained to help pedestrians cross on a rota basis (and a similar arrangement successfully operates at some other schools in Surrey). Given the large number of parents that have raised concerns and signed the petition, hopefully sufficient volunteers will come forward to enable this option to be introduced (even if it is only on a temporary basis until a permanent school crossing patrol officer can be recruited or an alternative solution implemented). The county council's Safer Travel team would work with the school to provide training and support to either a new school crossing patrol officer or a group of parent volunteers.

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Committee is asked to note that:

- (i) The most immediate solution to the concerns raised in the petition would be provided if a new school crossing patrol officer could be recruited or if a group of parents volunteered to operate on a rota basis to help pedestrians cross Upper Chobham Road. In both instances the county council's Safer Travel team would provide all necessary training and support.
- (ii) The existing proposal to introduce a speed table at the crossing point together with speed cushions on either approach will be retained on the Surrey Heath scheme list. The introduction of a controlled crossing will be added to the proposal which will then be assessed alongside other priorities for inclusion in the Local Committee's future work programmes. However, at current budget levels it would be necessary for additional sources of funding to be identified to allow the proposal to be introduced. Officers will therefore continue to investigate potential alternative sources of funding.

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