

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



LOCAL COMMITTEE (EPSOM & EWELL)

DATE: **9 December 2019**
 SUBJECT: **Chalk Lane petition**
 DIVISION: **Epsom Town and Downs**

PETITION DETAILS:

A petition with 104 signatures has been received relating to Chalk Lane in Epsom. The lead petitioner is Alex Dean. The petition reads asks to:

reduce the speed limit of Chalk Lane, Worple Road & Woodcote End from 30 to 20 miles per hour, install better signage which clearly conveys how the lane should be used as well as implement enforcement measures on the lane to ensure that drivers comply with the speed limit and existing one-way system.

Further details were provided in a cover letter as set out below:

The Chalk Lane Conservation Area is one of the Borough's "most important conservation areas", as stated by the Council's own Character Appraisal & Management Proposals (2010) and which also charges the Council with ensuring the "special character" of the lane is preserved.

This petition is submitted on behalf of the residents of, and those who live in proximity to Chalk Lane, as well as the many people that regularly traverse the lane on foot, bike or by horse, that wish to register their concerns with the Council over vehicles being driven in an anti-social manner on the lane. The road is regularly misused as a cut-through by those who are not resident on the lane and drivers regularly exceed the speed limit by a fair margin when travelling down from Langley Vale Road. Cars and mopeds also regularly enter the lane from Woodcote Green Road thereby ignoring the one-way that is in place at that section and often do so at alarming speeds because drivers know they are breaking the law. Existing measures to prevent these illegal acts are ineffectual, the sign at the top of Chalk Lane is far too ambiguous and many drivers using the lane as a cut-through may be doing so simply because the sign has failed to inform them that this is prohibited. When residents have challenged such drivers they are frequently verbally abused, have threats of violence made against them and have had vehicles swerved towards them, which in one instance resulted in a resident being struck.

The lane is busy and has a very varied use, in addition to pedestrians and cyclists the lane is used by children and parents of St Martin's school which is in very close proximity, as well as by The Durdans stables and Epsom Downs Training Centre whose horses use the lane daily. When this is considered in relation to the characteristics of the lane, which has restricted pavement, is narrow, has many bends and turns as well as high banks and walls, it is surely clear why residents and users of Chalk Lane are deeply concerned at these misuses

and confident that a serious, although ultimately preventable, accident will take place unless the situation is not remedied by the Council.

The signatories and accompanying supporting letters thus put to the Council that they have a duty to act and tackle this issue of anti-social driving, so as to preserve the nature of the lane and, most importantly, ensure the safety of all those who are using the lane correctly. The petition therefore requests the Council reduces the speed limit of Chalk Lane, Worple Road and Woodcote End from 30 to 20 miles per hour, install better signage which clearly conveys how the lane should be used as well as implement enforcement measures on the lane to ensure that drivers comply with this speed limit and the existing one-way system.

Better still the gate outside the Durdans Stables should be replaced with a sturdier permeant barrier to vehicles but which does not obstruct the passage of pedestrians, cyclists and horses. This would put an end to the lane being misused as a cut-through while still giving access to owners of horses stabled in the paddocks and deliveries to the main stables from Langley Vale Road, residents would also still have full access to all houses via Warpole road. Ashley road is more than sufficient for all vehicle traffic, reserving Chalk Lane for non-vehicle traffic in this way would provide the council with a low cost, simple solution to all the issues outlined above.

RESPONSE:

Chalk Lane Conservation Area

As referenced in the petition, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is the responsible authority regarding preservation of the special character. Surrey County Council is supportive of the borough council in undertaking these duties.

Road safety and prioritisation of safety schemes

The council currently receives funding to be used specifically to reduce road casualties. In partnership with Surrey Police road collisions are monitored across the county. There are thousands of road traffic collisions every year that result in an injury, the vast majority of which are caused by human error. We focus our road safety resources on those sites where there are patterns of casualties, because we can then be reasonably confident of identifying whether an engineering intervention might help reduce the frequency of casualties at a particular site. We then prioritise investment in those sites with the highest frequency of casualties, where we believe an engineering intervention would be beneficial. Given the number of existing sites where there are patterns of casualties, when considering investment in road safety we are obliged to prioritise those sites with the greatest frequency of casualties, ahead of those sites with a lesser frequency of casualties.

Surrey Police shares data on collisions where an injury has been recorded. The police record likely factors that may have contributed to a collision resulting in injury. Collision data may be viewed on the publicly-accessible website Crash Map.

<http://www.crashmap.co.uk/>

When monitoring road casualties it is standard practice to review data from the most recent three year period. This enables patterns to be identified and sites to be compared. Available data for the most recent three year period records the following:

- May 2018 – Chalk Lane, near Public Footpath 30; collision involving van and pedestrian; slight injury to pedestrian; no recorded likely contributory factors.

The above data shows that Chalk Lane does not have a recent history of multiple collisions causing injury where a pattern can be identified. This means that specific road safety funding could not be justified when compared with other locations.

Speeding and enforcement

It is appreciated that a minority of drivers do not behave responsibly or considerately. The petitioners are encouraged to raise this specific concern with Surrey Police, as Surrey Police are the sole agency with powers to take enforcement action against drivers who exceed the speed limit.

Within Surrey fixed safety enforcement cameras are reserved for the very worst collision hotspots where there has been a serious history of collisions causing injury, and where speeds have been measured and confirmed as being excessive. This ensures that enforcement is prioritised at the sites that need the most attention, and helps maintain public support for safety cameras to improve road safety. Consequently there are no plans to introduce camera enforcement at this site. Speeding and failure to comply with the traffic signals are essentially police enforcement issues as these are criminal offences, for which the police is the sole highway enforcement agency. Residents may be interested in the Drive Smart initiative, which has the aims of reducing road casualties, tackling anti-social driving and making the county's roads safer and less stressful for everyone. The below websites include information on reporting concerns, enforcement, education and Community Speed Watch initiatives.

<http://www.drivesmartsurrey.org.uk/i-am-worried-about-the-safety/>

<https://www.surrey.police.uk/ro/report/rti/report-a-road-traffic-incident/>

There may be potential for the Joint Enforcement Team formed by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and Surrey Police to consider measures. We are not aware if this has been explored or whether it would be practical.

Schemes promoted by Epsom and Ewell Local Committee

As well as schemes to specifically address problems evidenced by a history of injuries, Surrey County Council does introduce other local highways improvement schemes. For example, these may be to improve traffic flow, relieve congestion, provide or improve facilities such as pedestrian crossings, or to address locations where residents have highlighted areas of concern. These are the types of schemes promoted via the local committee, with consideration of all schemes and available funding.

In the 1980s there was a problem with traffic congestion on Langley Vale Road and Ashley Road and people using Chalk Lane as a short cut to avoid Ashley Road. In terms of enforcement of the No Entry Except For Access, motorists could say they needed access to the pub or a number of places on Chalk Lane. It was also used by WS Atkins staff going to the office at the bottom of Chalk Lane and was as a parking area for staff at Epsom Hospital. In addition there were racehorses using Chalk Lane to access the Downs from The Durdans which was a large stables at the time. The residents requested action but it was not possible to introduce vertical traffic calming as it was used by horses and cycles and did not have street lighting. Traffic calming features require illumination so it would have meant installing an electric supply and street lighting. This requirement still applies today.

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Following consultations it was decided with the local councillor at the time (Chris Frost), to introduce a gate to deter motorists using it as a short cut. The traffic order was made but the council had reservations about issuing keys to all the residents of Chalk Lane and the roads with sole access from Chalk Lane.

Worlds End. Also because the Chalk Lane hotel had regular deliveries, functions, conferences and wedding receptions with different vehicles needing access it was decided to install a spring loaded gate instead which was not locked. Coaches, for example for The Chalk Lane Hotel, could not make the turn at Worple Road into Chalk Lane so they needed access from the southern end. This also applied to delivery vehicles and the access arrangements remain at the current time.

It appears that this system worked well for a number of years, in that the amount of traffic reduced dramatically. Waiting restrictions were also introduced at the northern end which reduced the amount of Atkins and hospital traffic. However about 10 years ago the gate was vandalised. This was replaced but then damaged again, the cycle being repeated several times to the total cost of about £10k.

The decision was taken, with the local Member, that this could not carry on and it was left without a gate for a period. Unsurprisingly the local residents requested action and it was agreed to install a second gate at the top end and associated signs. It was also agreed that further maintenance would not be carried out if they were damaged or vandalised again.

Observations by our local officers are that the road is not heavily trafficked but of course any additional traffic can be a nuisance for residents. Using Chalk Lane as a direct alternative for Ashley Road does involve negotiating the traffic signals on the A24 near the petrol station as well as the narrow sections of Chalk Lane and the right turn onto Woodcote Road, whereas Ashley Road is reasonably wide with no additional difficult junctions or traffic signals. It is likely, as a result of the Epsom Plan E works, some re-routing of traffic has been taking place in the area as a whole.

Additional measures

Following recent representations, additional signs have been designed and ordered. These will provide advanced warning of the No Entry Except For Access close to the junction of Langley Vale Road and Chalk Lane. These are funded by the local divisional Member's highways allocation and installation is being programmed by Surrey CC's contractor.

The petition requests the lowering of the speed limit to 20mph. In order to comply with the council's speed limit policy, which is based on national guidance and aligns with the police approach to speed enforcement, speeds would need to be managed so as to be commensurate with the new limit. Evidence and experience shows that lowering speed limits by signing alone has little, if any, effect on speeds. In some instances, a lowering of a speed limit has actually resulted in increased speeds as drivers tend to set their speeds based on the environment presented to them. A lowering of the speed limit to 20mph is likely to require physical traffic calming which is not feasible on Chalk Lane for the reasons mentioned above relating to required illumination.

Any further investigation is likely to conclude that it would still not be practical to provide a locked facility, as access is required for deliveries, both to residents and businesses on Chalk Lane, plus emergency access, refuse collection and the like. Consideration of a permanent stopping up somewhere along Chalk Lane would need to look at access by

larger vehicles, which may impact on properties near the junctions. To be successful, in practice this would require a physical barrier. The siting of such a barrier would impact on the residents and businesses on Chalk Lane. A key consideration would be the likely requirement to provide a turning area which is currently not possible within the existing public highway, likely requiring third party land.

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Committee is asked to:

- (i) *Decide whether to include a scheme on the prioritisation list for consideration in a future highway programme;*

Contact Officer:

Nick Healey, Area Highways Manager

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