



SCC LOCAL COMMITTEE IN ELMBRIDGE – 24 June 2013

AGENDA ITEM 9a

**RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTION SUBMITTED
at the Elmbridge Local Committee on 25 February 2013**

Question 1 : Caroline Stevenson, Resident

I would like to ask if the Members of the Elmbridge Local Committee are aware of the current dangers to children, pedestrians, horses and riders from fast traffic exiting the A309 Esher slip road and encountering these vulnerable road users, as well as the unexpected two-way traffic on Woodstock Lane South.

Vehicles leave the 50 mph A309 dual carriageway taking a wide left-curving slip road, and suddenly confront four major hazards.

1 There are children from The Oaks who often play between the site driveways, but with no pavement on either side, they are inevitably in the road. A child has been hit by a car here in the recent past. Pedestrians have no safe footway due to the irregularly-cut overgrowth from trees into the verges, pushing walkers onto the road.

2 There are horses and riders from three separate large stables along this short stretch of road.

Visibility is obscured by the bend in the road, and riders face oncoming traffic on the wrong side of the road, as they ride home. As lorries swerve back to the correct side of the road their loads can shift noisily, upsetting the horses. Horses have frequently been spooked, as well as hit, in this vicinity.

3 There is regular fly-tipping on this road, the amount often requiring Elmbridge to remove it by the truck load.

4 In addition, there is an on-going road surface problem, with water constantly leaking into pot holes which vehicles try to dodge around, (adjacent to The Oaks). After heavy rain this is a flood point too.

The current speed limit of 40 mph is sign-posted from the bottom of the slip road bend.

For the above reasons, I am requesting as a matter of urgency, a speed reduction to 30 mph. To improve visibility and reaction time I suggest the signs are attached from nearer the top of the off-slip road, where there are already lampposts to take them.

The request is only for this particularly hazardous stretch of Woodstock Lane South, to its T junction with Clayton Road.

Further comments from Ken Huddart of Claygate Parish Council:

I was delighted that Caroline Stevenson was able to put this question, and wish to support her by mentioning points that should be handled in the reply. I have now changed my view of the site. I did think that Claygate Parish Council had achieved what was necessary with the 40mph limit. But in researching her question, I have noted two relevant injury accidents in the five years to Feb 2011, for which I currently have records: one was a girl hit by a vehicle out of control, and the other (serious) a head-on/side-swipe collision. Although Caroline would like to see a 30mph limit (there are many precedents for this on exit slip roads), it may be more realistic to treat it as needing traffic calming of a route through a community. There is increasing official support for this sort of thing e.g. in *Manual for Streets*, and in the new Circular 01/2013, which repeatedly advocates the related matter of more 20mph limits. I well understand the limitations on traffic calming measures that would be acceptable here, and that one would have to concentrate on road markings, appearance changes and perhaps a gateway. Caroline has been able to identify an acceptable champion from within the dense traveller community, with whom you could establish real Localism. You would also note that the northernmost part of the community is a formal Surrey C.C. travellers' site, so you have an interest in keeping it safe.

Letter from Kevin Ryan, Gypsy Liaison Officer at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, to Surrey County Council's Highways Department:

Dear Sir

SPEED LIMIT ON WOODSTOCK LANE SOUTH

I am responsible for managing the Oaks Traveller site in Woodstock Lane South on behalf of Surrey County Council. The site consists of 16 pitches, all of them occupied, and has a rather high number of children, 27 in all.

For some time now I have been very concerned about the speed of traffic along Woodstock Lane South which I believe poses a danger, not just for the residents living on the Oaks, but also for those living in the yards along this stretch of road, and horse riders, who I see on a regular basis. There is also a busy golf club entrance.

I have on many occasions witnessed motorists exiting the fast moving A309 and maintaining a similar high speed on Woodstock Lane South which is inappropriate for a single lane road. The access road from the Oaks is not very far from the A309 exit, so driving in and out of the site can be hazardous, regardless of the care taken by residents and visitors. In addition, Woodstock Lane South has no pavement or pedestrian pathway, so there is an increased potential for conflict between motorists and pedestrians.

As I have already stated, there are 27 children living on the Oaks and it is inevitable that, when playing, they will sometimes emerge in to the road, where I believe they are at high risk of being hit by a speeding vehicle. This in itself is, in my view, sufficient reason for giving serious consideration to a lower speed limit of, say, 30mph. The only other option would be to introduce speed humps.

I should be glad if you would please accept this letter as a request to consider a reduction in the speed limit on Woodstock Lane South

As a matter of courtesy I am sending a copy of this letter to Cheryl Poole, Community Partnerships and Committee Officer at Elmbridge Borough Council.

Yours faithfully,

[etc]

The Chairman will give the following response:

First of all on behalf of Surrey County Council I would like to apologise to all interested parties for the delay in responding to Mrs Caroline Stevenson's original question. This response attempts to answer the concerns originally raised by Mrs Stevenson, and also the comments made by Ken Huddart of Claygate Parish Council and Kevin Ryan, Gypsy Liaison Officer at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

The principal concern raised by Mrs Stevenson, Mr Huddart and Mr Ryan is the risk of conflict between vehicles entering Woodstock Lane South from the A309 and other road users in Woodstock Lane South: pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists, other drivers, and in particular the residents of The Oaks, many of whom are children.

The accident history for Woodstock Lane, between the A309 and the Golf Club entrance, shows that between 1st January 2009 and 31st October 2012, there were two personal injury collisions. Surrey Police's record of the collisions reports that one collision involved a driver driving on the wrong side of the road, and suggests that the driver was travelling too fast for the conditions. On the day of this first collision the road surface was slippery due to the weather. The actual speed of the vehicle is not recorded. The other collision involved a young child running into a vehicle that was reversing, and did not cite speed as being a contributory factor. These are the only two accidents recorded in the previous full three year period for which records are available – this is the normal time period for accident analysis.

The data held on record of accidents since 1987 shows only three further accidents along this same section, one occurred in 1987 of unknown factors, and another in 1992 involved drunk cyclists. The third occurred in 2006 and is more relevant to the concerns expressed, in so far as the Police record suggests the driver was exceeding the speed limit, and also travelling too fast for the conditions. The Police record also suggests that the road surface was slippery (due to the weather) and that the vehicle's tyres were illegally defective or under inflated. While every casualty is regrettable, this is a good accident record when compared to other locations.

A number of specific safety concerns are cited, some of which could be addressed by engineering measures:

- The speed of vehicles leaving the A309.

The opportunity to reduce the speed limit on the A309 Kingston Bypass from national speed limit (70mph) to 50mph was taken following the reduction to 50mph on the A3. Although there was no change to the speed limit in Woodstock Lane South at this time, the reduction of the speed limit on the A309 would have reduced the speed of vehicles entering Woodstock Lane South.

It is suggested by Mrs Stevenson and Mr Ryan that the speed limit in Woodstock Lane South itself should be reduced to 30mph. Mr Huddart and Mr Ryan suggest that traffic calming should be provided. All three call for a reduction in traffic speeds at this location. As Committee is aware, only speed limits that are in accordance with Surrey County Council's policy may be promoted by the Local Committee. In this case a 30mph speed limit would not comply with the speed limit policy. Under the current speed limit policy this section of Woodstock Lane South would be considered to be either a road with partial development (though not enough development to be defined as a village), or a Local Distributor or Access Road. The minimum speed limit allowed for in the speed limit policy for such roads is 40mph. The speed limit policy has been designed in the

knowledge that drivers only abide by speed limits where the road environment corresponds to the speed limit. Otherwise drivers simply disregard the speed limit and it is of no value. Therefore unfortunately a reduction of speed limit would be contrary to Surrey County Council's speed limit policy, and is unlikely to have any effect on driver behavior.

On the other hand it may be feasible to introduce traffic calming measures – signs, road markings, coloured surfacing, a gateway feature, etc – to encourage drivers to slow down. It may also be feasible to move the current 40mph terminal signs closer to the A309, and to make them more conspicuous to drivers. These measures would be relatively inexpensive, in the range £20k - £30k, and would necessitate feasibility, detailed design, and (for the moving of the speed limit signs) a traffic regulation order. If such measures were to be provided, they would complement the existing warning signs on the slip road advising drivers to be aware of horses on the carriageway, as well as the existing SLOW markings.

Road humps are not permitted for roads with a speed limit greater than 30mph.

Surrey Police are responsible for enforcement of speed limit in Surrey. If there is any suggestion that drivers are flouting the existing speed limit, it would be for Surrey Police to investigate and respond to according to their own priorities.

- There is no footway in this section of Woodstock Lane South.

Initial assessment suggests that a new footway connecting the different entrances to The Oaks may be possible. A feasibility study would be needed to confirm this, followed by detailed design and construction if Committee would like to take this forwards. The total cost of providing a new footway in this section would be in the range £50k - £75k. The wear in the existing verge suggests that pedestrians are already using the verge on the east side of the road, and so if a new footway were to be provided, it would be beneficial to the local community. At this stage no surveys have been completed to quantify demand.

- The change from one-way to two-way operation at the foot of the slip road.

Close inspection of the road markings at the foot of the slip road suggests that the road markings have changed in recent years. The current road markings may lead drivers leaving the A309 towards the centre of Woodstock Lane South. Previous road markings would have encouraged drivers to keep to the left hand side of the slip road, and therefore would have encouraged drivers to enter Woodstock Lane South on the correct side of the road. Surrey County Council will amend the road markings at this location, to encourage drivers onto the left hand side of the slip road, and to encourage drivers to join Woodstock Lane South on the correct side of the road. The cost of this change is minimal, and will be covered from Committee's Pooled Revenue.

- Vehicles driving on the wrong side of the road.

This concern corroborates with the Police record of a collision in this location, mentioned above.

This could be related to the change from one-way to two-way operation at the foot of the slip road. If so then the proposed change to the road markings should address this. If drivers are choosing to drive on the wrong side of the road elsewhere, in spite of the existing centre line marking, then there is no engineering measure that would address this; it is a case of poor driver behaviour.

- Overgrown vegetation pushes pedestrians into the carriageway.

Officers will inspect the vegetation and arrange for any overhanging vegetation to be cut back.

- Poor forward visibility due to the horizontal alignment of the road.

Where this poor visibility is due to bends in the road, Surrey County Council cannot improve the situation as this would necessitate acquisition of private land to be able to straighten the road or clear back the vegetation. Either way, the acquisition of private land is not feasible.

Where this poor visibility is due to overgrown vegetation, this should be resolved by cutting back the overgrown vegetation.

- Poor condition of the carriageway – evident by the presence of potholes.

Officers will inspect the road and arrange repairs for any Safety Defects. Any defects that are not large enough to be considered Safety Defects will be left for the next routine inspection. If officers consider that the road requires more substantial maintenance, we will add the road to the list for consideration by the Local Committee in the next round of prioritisation.

- Surface water ponding.

Surrey County Council cleared its surface water drainage system in Woodstock Lane South during 2011. Previously to this the underpass underneath the A309 would flood whenever there was significant rain. As a result of the clearance work in 2011 any surface water on Woodstock Lane South near The Oaks will discharge into our drainage system. Officers have monitored the situation since 2011 and are satisfied that the surface water drainage system is still operating as intended. The gullies in this section do tend to fill with silt relatively quickly, and therefore require regular attention to ensure the system continues to operate.

Notwithstanding the work completed in 2011, there is a British Telecom (BT) manhole cover in Woodstock Lane South, from which water discharges continuously. Officers have made BT aware of this, but to date the source of this water is unknown. In addition there is an occasional discharge of water from The Oaks site onto the carriageway in Woodstock Lane South. The residents of The Oaks have informed officers that this water originates from the A3; this discharge generally coincides with significant rain. Surrey County Council's surface water system, now that it is working, is adequate to deal with these water sources, although the water emanating from the BT manhole does make it appear as if there are puddles on the road, even when there is no rain. Officers will continue to investigate the source of this water with BT.

- Children playing in the road.

This is related to the fact that there is currently no footway in this section of Woodstock Lane South. It may be that if a footway were to be provided, that children would no longer play in the carriageway. On the other hand it may be that children would continue to play in the carriageway.

- Fly tipping.

This is the responsibility of Elmbridge Borough Council to respond to according to their statutory powers and responsibilities.

Ultimately it would be for the Local Committee to prioritise any of the measures suggested above, and to identify funding for the feasibility, detailed design and construction works. Surrey County Council's Local Committee for Elmbridge has divided its Highways budgets equally between its nine Divisional Members for this Financial Year, with priority decisions being made by individual Members. These

decisions were made in March 2013 to enable this Financial Year's programme of works to be delivered.

Prioritisation of schemes for next Financial Year's programme will take place during Autumn 2013. At this juncture Officers will make the Divisional Member aware of the possible scheme in Woodstock Lane South. If the Local Committee continues its strategy for allocation of Highways budgets into next Financial Year, it would be for the Divisional Member to decide whether this scheme is a priority.

In the meantime if the Local Committee considers the concerns described above to be a high priority, and should be addressed without delay, Officers would be pleased to commission the necessary feasibility study, if funding were to be made available from a Member's individual Member Allocation, or from the Local Committee's (non-Highway) Capital Allocation.