

CHIPSTEAD ROADS PROJECT

THE BRIEF

Chipstead Residents' Association (CRA) wished to review the whole issue of problems with the roads in Chipstead. In August 2012 CRA Committee asked a team of local residents to undertake a project with the following brief:

Objective

To identify road problems (not associated with maintenance) perceived by Chipstead Residents and to propose solutions.

Methodology

A small team of volunteers will gather and collate data and opinions from individuals and groups in Chipstead. It will then seek ideas for solutions to problems it considers have the highest priority. It will, where possible, gather information about the feasibility of the solutions. The question of costs and timescales for implementation will not be addressed as part of this project.

The following paragraphs are extracted from their report, delivered in April 2013.

HOW WE APPROACHED THE TASK

We divided our task into a number of phases in order to bring a discipline into what is a complicated set of issues.

Phase 1: Gather views of Chipstead residents and groups about the problems they encountered and any solutions they envisaged.

To achieve this, CRA advertised on the village notice boards, the village website and the e-newsletter, inviting residents to provide their views to the project team via a special email address or by letter. To obtain views from all geographic areas and age groups, the project team complemented this with visits to interview individuals and organisations around the village and with their own lists of issues and solutions. They also looked at the results of earlier surveys of opinions.

The team then obtained the best available maps for the area contained by the A217/M25/A23 and A2022. They also noted the current restrictions on speed, width and usage affecting Chipstead roads.

Phase 2: List the problems and solutions and look for any items which could be implemented quickly

The **30 problems** we listed were able to be categorized as:

- Too many vehicles, especially in rush hours
- Increasing HGV traffic
- Vehicles driven too fast on roads that are often narrow and winding
- Residents unable to walk in safety along roads lacking pavements
- Cyclists and horse riders unable to travel safely
- Damage to verges, driveways and hedges
- Exhaust and noise pollution.

Attention was drawn to a particular concern that any proposed solutions should not transfer traffic from one over-used road to another.

Having discussed many possible approaches for dealing with these problems the team created **five categories of solutions:**

- Physical barriers to traffic
- Measures designed to reduce speed
- Measures to assist pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders
- Priority action for 'hotspots'
- Keeping traffic on the trunk roads.

Phase 3: Test the solutions

The team then spent considerable time testing the feasibility of the various solutions.

Towards the end of this Phase, we were also made aware of the probability of a Cane Hill vehicle access onto Portnalls Road, some 200 metres from the village boundary. The potential for increased traffic using Chipstead roads for access to this development of 650 and more dwellings plus commercial space implies a significant worsening of the present problems.

We became concerned that the already intolerable peak hour traffic flows through the village (recorded as long ago as 2010 as being 3,250 vehicles into the village and 3,050 out between 0700 and 0900) will be made even worse if traffic to and from Cane Hill is routed through the village.

Whilst special measures may well be necessary to deal with the Cane Hill issue, the proposals we make in this report will remain relevant, whatever those special measures turn out to be.

Physical barriers to traffic

We looked at privatising parts of roads in order to be able to bring about road closures. This is a complicated process and we have not obtained a clear understanding as to how it could be achieved. We also considered closures not linked to privatisation. Whilst this is less complex, in most cases we would find it difficult to persuade the competent authorities to bring about the change, bearing in mind the need for access by emergency and refuse vehicles, gritters etc.

We gave some time to looking for a general one-way system around the centre of Chipstead. We concluded that many of the benefits this produced could also be achieved by traffic calming measures without the penalties a one-way system would involve in the form of longer journeys. It also became evident that to influence traffic volumes, such a scheme would necessarily be complex.

Measures designed to reduce speed

We considered a variety of ideas to reduce speed in particular locations. These include narrow prioritized sections, humps, chicanes, narrowed carriageways and speed limits.

We are conscious of the widely-held belief, and evidence from the Department for Transport, that speed limits on their own do not reduce speeds. It is also clear that we cannot expect police action to enforce limits.

We believe the arguments against road humps (e.g. vehicle damage, unsightliness, urbanization, poor drainage) remain valid and suggest they should only be considered if other measures are seen to fail.

Measures designed to assist pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

One of the most significant and intractable issues requiring attention was problems of residents and visitors to Chipstead's numerous facilities when they are not travelling in

vehicles. The lack of pavements and suitable footpaths prevent residents walking from their homes to trains, buses, shops and sports clubs as well as the Village Hall, the Church and the Theatre.

The lack of adequate footpaths and pavements is made worse by the volume and speed of traffic using lanes that were originally intended for horses. These lanes have poor drainage, many narrow and winding sections, no kerbs and no street lighting.

We concluded that the best outcome we could reasonably seek would be a general slowing of traffic, along with appropriate signs drawing drivers' attention to the need to be considerate to other road users. This should be complemented by an improved footpath network.

Priority action for 'hotspots'

We spent some time identifying hotspots which we defined for pedestrians as "any point where it is unusually dangerous for pedestrians to enter, leave, cross or walk on the highway." In some cases, the issues are so intractable that we can only rely on measures to reduce speeds in general through the village.

Where sightlines involve motorists not being able to see pedestrians until they are very close (and vice versa) the issues are more serious. There are places where this is dangerous in daylight and much worse after dark.

Keeping traffic on the trunk roads

We gave this idea a very thorough examination and our conclusions are contained in the next section.

WHAT WE PROPOSE AND WHY

20 mph zone

After long discussion, and taking account of the views of residents about the speed of vehicles, along with emerging data from the police-backed Speedwatch initiative, we concluded that unless vehicle speeds can be reduced, very little can be done to achieve the safety and environmental improvements which we seek.

We concluded that individual measures to slow traffic at particular points will not by themselves create an adequate deterrent. They would need to be very numerous to cope with all the problem areas and drivers who are slowed at one point will try to make up time by accelerating away from them and speeding on other sections of road.

It became apparent to us that we need to bring home to all drivers that Chipstead is a place which needs special care and attention. Our recommendation to achieve this is the introduction of a 20 mph zone which will embrace all the major problem areas, with signs at each entry point drawing attention to the fact that Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse-riders will be encountered in this zone.

We believe the introduction of this zone is the top priority for the village and should be pursued with the utmost vigour.

It will provide a context for other changes which can then be sought over timescales suitable to their priority and cost.

A considerable advantage of a 20 mph zone is that under the provisions of The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1999 and of The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999, street lighting and specific signs are not required for traffic calming

measures or road humps within a 20 mph zone. This assists in avoiding environmental disadvantages which could otherwise accrue from traffic calming.

The 20mph zone will provide the opportunity to develop traffic calming measures over time, as funding permits.

Cyclists and Equestrians

Ideally, these road users should be separated from vehicles. We found that this is not realistic in Chipstead because there is simply not enough width on our roads to provide sensible separation. These road users do, however, provide a compelling reason for the adoption of the 20mph zone and appropriate traffic calming measures.

LIMITS OF 20 MPH ZONE

The principles guiding our choice of roads to be included in the zone are:

All roads where pedestrians, cyclists and horses are obliged to use the carriageway should be included.

Where special care is needed because of frequent use by pedestrians and local traffic, (e.g. the school frontage in Chipstead Valley Road, the roads around Church Green, the area around the Village Hall, the Meads, the White Hart pub and the theatre) these roads should be included.

All roads where pedestrians have to cross the carriageway to reach footpaths and pavements should be included because of the poor sightlines for drivers and the lack of street lighting.

The zone should commence where it is appropriate to make clear to motorists that they are entering an area with unusual hazards and need to adjust their speed accordingly.