

Cabinet Member for Highways & Community Resilience Decisions

27 September 2022

MAKE THAMES STREET SAFER AND PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE

1. install a speed camera on Thames Street
2. smooth the on/off ramps of the speed bumps (not remove them) to reduce reverberation and harm to the heritage buildings in the street

Thames Street runs through the Conservation Area and has over thirty 18th and 19th century Grade II listed buildings, many of which are homes. Even with speed bumps many vehicles go through the street well above the 20mph speed limit:

1. The narrowness of the pavement and road make this a serious accident waiting to happen.
2. Buses (11 plus tonnes) and occasional heavier vehicles cause substantial shuddering of the heritage buildings:
 - this shuddering is significantly worse when their speed approaches and exceeds 20 mph
 - a bus which gets slowed by 2 mph on a steep ramp causes similar reverberations to an average car running into a brick wall at 30 mph
 - over 90 buses go down Thames Street each day.
3. The speed bump ramps are too steep and do **not** comply with TfL's recommendations for buses.

The existing 7.5 tonnes vehicle weight limit already recognises the impact which heavy vehicles have along Thames Street. The buses are exempt, which we fully support, as they serve a vital service to the community.

The speed camera will ensure tight adherence to the speed limit making it a safer place for residents and pedestrians and this, along with the smoothing of the speed bumps, will preserve the heritage of the buildings.

Submitted by: Patrick Leaney

Signatures: 100+

Response:

Many thanks for raising your concerns over speeding and road safety on Thames Street Lower Sunbury. I very much sympathise with the concerns being raised. Excess speeds increase the risk of road collisions and make the consequences worse. Higher speeds also make places less pleasant to live in by increasing noise and air pollution and making walking and cycling less attractive.

To tackle this Surrey County Council works closely with Surrey Police to create local speed management plans for each District or Borough. This means that whenever there are concerns over speeding, we will measure the speeds using a speed detection radar box which is a black box mounted on street furniture without anyone really knowing what it is or what it is for. This will collect data for at least a week. This data is combined with data on the collisions resulting in personal injury recorded by the police to ascertain the extent and nature of the speeding and road safety problem at each site.

Each site is then discussed with the police to determine which sites need the most attention, and then depending on the nature of the problem and the physical characteristics of the site the most appropriate intervention is agreed.

Interventions could include permanent speed cameras (including average speed cameras) at the worst sites where traffic calming is infeasible, traffic calming, police enforcement (either by hand-held laser or camera van), vehicle activated signs or community speed watch. Where the level of speeding is not that great then the location is unlikely to be prioritised for intervention. Therefore, this site will be added to the list of sites requiring a speed survey, and then the data will be discussed with the police.

This stretch of Thames Street between French Street and Halliford Road, approximately 1km long, already has a total of 13 raised table traffic calming features, and these have been in situ for over 20 years. This is one of the most traffic calmed stretches of road in Surrey. The County Council's policy on speed cameras (agreed by Cabinet in September 2021) states that speed cameras will only be considered at locations where traffic calming is infeasible. This is because traffic calming (if feasible) will always provide a more cost-effective long-term solution compared to speed cameras because speed cameras will require ongoing maintenance and processing of offences and court time to prosecute motorists enduringly. In comparison traffic calming will largely solve the problem without the need to issue penalties to motorists ad-infinitum. Therefore, we do not have any plans to introduce permanent speed cameras on this stretch. Instead, if the speed surveys highlight a particular problem, perhaps at certain times of the day, then this will be raised with the police in case they are able to provide this stretch with additional targeted attention.

From initial inspection of the raised road tables there does not appear to be any aspect that is non-compliant with national guidance. For example, the steepness of the ramps (with an approximate 1 in 20 gradient) complies with national guidance for bus routes. Reducing the steepness of the ramps could be problematical and costly because it could result in increased speeds and may also require the repositioning of the adjacent drainage gullies at the bottom of some of the ramps. Therefore, we do not have any plans to change the design of the raised road tables.

Nonetheless I sympathise with the concerns over the noise and vibration and note that this has been highlighted as being associated with buses (with a weight restriction deterring other larger vehicles). Therefore, officers have raised this concern with the bus companies to ask them to remind drivers of the need to respect the 20mph speed limit and to take extra care in travelling over the raised road tables. It is expected that the bus companies will have records on the speeds of their vehicles and so will be able to monitor and provide suitable advice to their drivers accordingly.

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