

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth Decisions

31 10 2023

TITLE: Ewell Village Traffic Exclusion Zone

We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to withdraw their proposals to exclude traffic from parts of Ewell High Street, and to maintain the current access for all vehicles.

Justification:

The desire for safer streets is understandable, but the three proposals for reduced vehicle access would lead to severe congestion and increased traffic pollution in neighbouring streets. They would also threaten the viability of High Street shops.

Submitted by: Alan Rogers – 359 signatures

RESPONSE:

In light of the significant amount of research and engagement carried out in Ewell Village over the past 12+ months, and subsequent traffic modelling on proposed options, the Council does not wish to withdraw the current proposals. The democratic process undertaken to date will continue, and following analysis of feedback received during the June/July 2023 engagement period, a determination will be made at that stage on the most appropriate way forward.

Background

In 2020, as part of the Covid-19 Emergency Space Measures, a proposal was set out to close Ewell High Street adjacent to the intersection of West Street/Church Street to all traffic except buses. This proposal was not favoured by many residents, fearing that local traffic would simply spill on to adjacent West Street and Staneway. SCC subsequently decided not to progress with this proposal.

This resulted in a number of local community groups becoming more active in discussions around what the future of the village could look like. Two community-led surveys were conducted in 2021 and numerous local clean-up events were held in conjunction with EEBC.

The main items of note that emerged from these two surveys (which had over 400 and 250 responses respectively) included: high traffic volumes through the centre of the village, poor levels of pedestrian safety and movement, a need for more pedestrian space and more crossings, poor air quality, and a desire for the return of an initial free period of parking in the village car parks.

A subsequent Facebook survey carried out in the village also displayed themes including the dominance of traffic and its detrimental effects, prohibitive parking charges in the car parks, support for pedestrianisation (timed or permanent) to enable more outdoor dining etc, a need to green the High Street, and calls for improving safety for pedestrians, particularly children walking to school.

Further Research

Additional qualitative research, led by SCC, was subsequently carried out in the village in mid-2022. This supplemented the data already collected in the community-led surveys, aiming to gain a greater understanding of what is attractive about the village as well as what issues exist that are stifling the village from reaching its full potential. The research

additionally gathered a greater understanding of how the High Street is currently used, and enabled a cross section of residents, businesses, and visitors to provide relevant feedback to influence potential proposals. The main themes that emerged from the research were:

- There is a cohesive voice regarding the negative impact that traffic is having on the village and that something needs to be done
- Parking was agreed to be an issue, with low usage of off-street car parks and high usage of on-street spaces
- Traffic calming and/or reduction is acknowledged to be necessary to bring back a village atmosphere
- More interesting and diverse businesses could be attracted to the village
- Feelings abound that the Councils (SCC and EBC) have favoured Epsom over Ewell for many years in terms of investment and support

This latter piece of research was placed online on SCC's commonplace website in late 2022 (for note rather than comment) and received over 100 further notes of support.

Proposals

All of the above research fed into the commencement of designs for the village, which aimed to reduce the negative impacts of traffic passing through the village, improve pedestrian safety, and encourage a more thriving and connected centre. The proposals were:

- A) High Street traffic restricted to buses only between Reigate Road and Costa Coffee.
- B) High Street fully pedestrianised between Reigate Road and Costa Coffee.
- C) High Street open to all traffic southbound, with an additional road closure between Cheam Road and West Street.

In line with lessons learnt from the 2020 proposal (which did not include any measures on surrounding streets), all three proposals that were on display in June include protection measures on West Street and Staneway to prevent rat-running on these adjacent streets. Thus, none of the proposals would lead to increased traffic and pollution in these narrow residential streets.

Traffic Modelling

Traffic modelling was undertaken on all three proposals, all of which indicate an increase in traffic along the A24 by-pass and in general a reduction in traffic in the centre of the village. Village streets in which the modelling indicated an increase in two-way traffic were London Road between the A24 and Kingston Road (in option C) and Reigate Road and Cheam Road between the A24 and High Street (in options A and B).

Community Engagement

As part of the qualitative research carried out in 2022, a number of businesses participated (in addition to residents and visitors), many of whom shared concerns about the high levels of traffic passing through the village and the damage that this was doing. A recent meeting held by SCC with local traders (all were invited, approximately 1/3 attended) indicated mixed feelings about the traffic along the High Street, with some expressing concern that removal of passing traffic could have a negative impact on trade.

The community engagement carried out during the summer of 2023 was undertaken democratically, with each person entitled to express their opinion. Four in-person events were held in the village, which gave members of the public the opportunity to talk with the project team and ask questions about the proposals. Letters were sent in the post to over 2,700 properties in the village advertising the engagement, in addition to social media posts, notes in local newsletters, and posters being put up across the village. The engagement was very successful at attracting conversation, receiving over 1,200 responses in total.

Subject to the outcomes of the community engagement, which are currently being analysed, it may be necessary to hold a further round of engagement with revised proposals.

Matt Furniss

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth

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