

Questions from members of the public

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD)

DATE: 2 NOVEMBER 2020

LEAD OFFICER: JESS EDMUNDSON, PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE OFFICER

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

DIVISION: ALL



Question 1: Bill Jessup, Cycle Redhill and Reigate

Back in May the Secretary of State for Transport announced statutory guidance and funding for ‘a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities’. With the Council’s ambitious climate change strategy and a severe lack of quality cycle infrastructure in the borough, this seemed a chance for positive change.

However:

- The Council’s tranche 1 application was short, lacked detail & consequently meant the Council only received 50% of indicative funding from the DfT.
- Locally, the main tranche 1 scheme was the Reigate High Street scheme. This seemed a strange choice, it would undoubtedly be controversial but also offered few benefits, so we gathered concerns & questions from local residents. We never received any answers and the scheme went ahead.
- The scheme was abandoned within 3 days.
- It is noted there is a proposal in this meeting to fund a 20mph speed limit for the centre of a Reigate. Whilst welcome, the volume of motor traffic still means any of these roads would still receive a critical fail as a cycle route under DfT guidance and as the statutory guidance makes clear “20mph limits alone will not be sufficient to meet the needs of active travel.”
- The Council opened a consultation portal asking for residents’ ideas. There was significant feedback locally. However, this only went live a week before the tranche 2 application had to be submitted.
- The tranche 2 submission includes proposals for two schemes in the south of the borough for over £1.5m. It would appear these were decided prior to the consultation opening & do not reflect the feedback from residents.
- Both schemes use shared-use footways. There is research by the Institution of Civil Engineers which indicates shared use footways are worse at getting people cycling than taking no intervention. Consequently, this approach is considered against best practice, is contrary to current DfT guidance, is non-preferred in Surrey County Council’s cycle strategy and impacts on pedestrian utility.
- The designs appear to cede priority at every side road. Again this is contrary to DfT guidance and Surrey County Council’s cycle strategy.
- The A217 scheme says its purpose is to make “cycling and walking safer and easier along the length of A217 between the new Westvale Park housing development at Meath Green to Hookwood, Tesco’s superstore and Gatwick

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Airport”. However, there appears to be no link into or out of either Gatwick or Tesco, it just ends at the busy Longbridge roundabout.

- Likewise, the A23 route appears to end at the busy Chequers roundabout without any apparent safe route to or from Horley.
- In the consultation portal the only schemes showing for possible future schemes within the borough are two short stretches in Redhill.

Based on the above, do the committee feel the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) money has been used in a way which starts to deliver a “lasting and transformative change in how we make short journeys” locally and, if not, why should residents have confidence the Council is able to deliver the meaningful change outlined in the Government’s Gear Change policy vision? For example, with the council opening offices and a school at the former Canon site (which currently has c.500 parking spaces and no safe cycle access) when can we expect a quality cycle route linking it to Reigate town, the station & Redhill?

Response:

Thank you for your very comprehensive question, and I will address the questions you ask in the bullet points, before giving an answer to your specific question.

- **Locally, the main tranche 1 scheme was the Reigate High Street scheme. This seemed a strange choice, it would undoubtedly be controversial but also offered few benefits, so we gathered concerns & questions from local residents. We never received any answers and the scheme went ahead.**

There are a package of emergency Active Travel measures for Reigate Town Centre that included the pilot temporary cycle lane in Reigate Town Centre. The other measures included temporary 20mph speed limit to support the pilot temporary cycle lane, temporary direction signs for cyclists and pedestrians connecting to the train station, temporary cycle parking supported by temporary planters, temporary parking restriction on Reigate Road to support the existing advisory cycle lane, and temporary removal of bollards outside of the Marks & Spencers store to aid social distancing.

Reigate High Street (A25) location was chosen for a pilot temporary active travel scheme because:

- (a) Reigate town centre, including the High Street (A25) is in an Air Quality Management Area,
- (b) The package of measures were to collaborate with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council on social distancing measures at town centre shops and businesses including Reigate and active travel,
- (c) The A25 provides an east-west corridor connecting Redhill, Reigate, Dorking and Guildford with an advisory cycle lane that stops at the High Street and then continues on the A25 on the exit from the town centre,

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(d) Information from this pilot temporary scheme could help inform other emergency active travel schemes.

At the time of the Government announcement of emergency active travel funding, the country was just emerging from national lockdown due to the pandemic. Social distancing meant that more space was needed for walking and cycling to reduce pressure on public transport and to help people return to work and school.

As an emergency response, the Government required the pilot schemes to be planned and installed within three months. Given this timeframe, we consulted key partners including the Borough Council, emergency services and bus operators. Normally, schemes of this nature would take years to develop and be subject to various stages of public consultation that might last several months and involve exhibitions etc. This was not possible given the timescale limitations required.

However, all comments received about the emergency active travel schemes to highways@surreycc.gov.uk were logged and taken in to consideration.

- The scheme was abandoned within 3 days.

The package of temporary emergency active travel measures were designed to support social distancing on our high streets, provide alternatives to public transport, and encourage residents to continue with the higher levels of walking and cycling we've seen since the pandemic lockdown.

The "pop up" cycle lane aimed to create a safe space for active travel and to encourage people to cycle rather than use motorised transport. This was an emergency response to increase travel options as part of the Government – led recovery from the pandemic.

The pilot temporary cycle lane in Reigate Town Centre was intended to have regular reviews, to adjust as necessary, and to help inform the feasibility and benefits of other proposals.

The pilot temporary cycle lane in Reigate Town Centre was quickly found to increase disruption to motorised traffic, as traffic volumes had increased since the rapid planning stage for the pilot scheme. The decision was quickly made for the pilot temporary cycle lane to be removed. However, the other elements of the temporary emergency active travel package for Reigate have remained.

- It is noted there is a proposal in this meeting to fund a 20mph speed limit for the centre of a Reigate. Whilst welcome, the volume of motor traffic still means any of these roads would still receive a critical fail as a cycle route under DfT guidance and as the statutory guidance makes clear "20mph limits alone will not be sufficient to meet the needs of active travel."

It is appreciated that 20mph speed limits alone will not be sufficient to meet the needs of active travel. Existing cycle infrastructure such as the advisory cycle lane in Church Street and the temporary cycle parking, as well as existing crossing points and pavement build outs in the High Street also help to meet the needs of active travel.

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The temporary cycle route signing has been introduced to highlight the active travel route between the train station and the town centre. The proposed 20mph speed limit meets with our “Setting Local Speed Limits” Policy and is intended to provide an improved environment for residents, and pedestrians who are using shops and businesses in the town centre.

The proposed 20mph speed limit, is an Active Travel funded scheme and is not being funded from Local Committee delegated budgets.

- The Council opened a consultation portal asking for residents’ ideas. There was significant feedback locally. However, this only went live a week before the tranche 2 application had to be submitted.

We had planned for several months to open the common place website to capture both new suggestions and comments on both tranche 1 and tranche 2 schemes. We agree that the timing was unfortunate, but we did not have much time to prepare our tranche 2 bid and so meaningful consultation was not possible.

- The tranche 2 submission includes proposals for two schemes in the south of the borough for over £1.5m. It would appear these were decided prior to the consultation opening & do not reflect the feedback from residents.

The government asked for all bids to be completed within 4 weeks including a business case and for all schemes to be finished by 31st March 2021. Due to this timescale, we chose schemes that were either at preliminary design or detailed design to enable us to comply with the March deadline

- Both schemes use shared-use footways. There is research by the Institution of Civil Engineers which indicates shared use footways are worse at getting people cycling than taking no intervention. Consequently, this approach is considered against best practice, is contrary to current DfT guidance, is non-preferred in Surrey County Council’s cycle strategy and impacts on pedestrian utility.

Whilst we accept that segregated cycle lanes are preferable, the physical limitations in many locations do not permit such segregation. We have many examples of successful shared use footways and the schemes proposed will enable people on bikes to travel with more confidence as they will be segregated from vehicles.

- The designs appear to cede priority at every side road. Again, this is contrary to DfT guidance and Surrey County Council’s cycle strategy.

The schemes in tranche 2 have not yet been through detail design or safety audit and so we will consider the question of priority as part of this process.

- The A217 scheme says its purpose is to make “cycling and walking safer and easier along the length of A217 between the new Westvale Park housing development at Meath Green to Hookwood, Tesco’s superstore and Gatwick Airport”. However, there appears to be no link into or out of either Gatwick or Tesco, it just ends at the busy Longbridge roundabout.

The proposed scheme will enable those who wish to cycle on this busy road to be segregated from vehicles. This is the purpose of the scheme, and whilst the scheme

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is proposed to end at Longbridge Roundabout, this does not make the scheme any less worthwhile.

- Likewise, the A23 route appears to end at the busy Chequers roundabout without any apparent safe route to or from Horley.

Cycle routes will unfortunately never be comprehensive, however, those that are in place do encourage cycling and will encourage additional infrastructure to create route corridors.

- In the consultation portal the only schemes showing for possible future schemes within the borough are two short stretches in Redhill.

The consultation portal shows the 2 proposed tranche 2 schemes, but also has suggestions from residents of active travel schemes and minor changes across the county.

In response to your question about lasting change, we are committed to continue to improve infrastructure for active travel with the ETAF, as this aligns with both Surrey's vision 2030 as well as our recently declared climate change emergency. Active travel is key to improving the challenges on congestion, air quality and carbon emissions and we are looking to continue the investment year on year to improve infrastructure in line with LTN 1/20.

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