

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



LOCAL COMMITTEE (SURREY HEATH)

DATE: 25 FEBRUARY 2021
 SUBJECT: WINDLESHAM ROAD AND BAGSHOT ROAD
 DIVISION: BAGSHOT, WINDLESHAM AND CHOBHAM

PETITION DETAILS:

A petition has been received asking the County Council to urgently review, update and install pedestrian priority crossings in and around Chobham village.

The petition contains 754 signatures and includes the following details:

Chobham is a village which has become a rat-run route that combines peak-hour traffic with parents and children walking to school. We request a review of the village pedestrian crossings. These include: A pedestrian priority crossing on Vicarage road outside the school. A pedestrian crossing at the junction of Chertsey Road & Windsor Road A pedestrian crossing on Station Road to the recreation ground. Traffic calming measures to include: Signage/ marking of crossing points. Signage/ traffic calming measures at the approaches to the school to warn vehicles and to encourage slower driving. A review and upgrade of the crossing on the High Street and the approach to the crossing - in particular how the pavements can be made safer from traffic and even temporarily during Covid social distancing. Chobham needs pedestrian priority crossings and upgrades to ensure safe walking through the village for all, including our children, the elderly and disabled.

RESPONSE:

Whilst the petition requests the introduction of improved crossing facilities for the benefit of all pedestrians, it particularly raises concerns about safety for parents and children walking to and from school.

Petitioners have also produced a detailed and helpful report setting out their concerns and suggesting possible solutions.

Officers from the county council's North West Area Highway Team have met virtually with several of the petitioners (parents of children attending St. Lawrence C of E Primary School) and the Head Teacher of the school to discuss their concerns and the process for considering them.

The county council's "Road Safety Outside Schools" (RSOS) policy sets out the process used for investigating and responding to concerns raised about safety outside schools. As part of the process the county council's safer travel team

arrange a site assessment with key colleagues including the council's local highways engineers, road safety engineering team and Surrey Police Road Safety and Traffic Management team.

The assessment includes analysis of parking, collisions, vehicle speeds, existing road conditions, signing, highway infrastructure and vehicle/pedestrian behaviour. Following the assessment, a report is produced detailing the findings and any recommendations or options for tackling concerns identified.

Since one has not previously been undertaken for the location, it is important that a RSOS assessment is carried out. In conjunction with the information provided by the petitioners, the findings of the assessment will help identify any problems encountered by pedestrians, the extent of these problems, and possible solutions if appropriate.

Delivering solutions, where possible, to problems identified could potentially be very costly in some instances (for example, the total cost of designing and installing a new signal-controlled pedestrian crossing is typically in excess of £100,000). Given the number of different requests within the petition, the petitioners have been asked to identify which they consider to be of highest priority.

Following the meeting with petitioners and the Head Teacher, the county council's Safer Travel Team contacted the Head Teacher to confirm that a RSOS assessment would be programmed. They also outlined the support that could be offered in helping the school develop a school travel plan (a document which identifies the journeys made to and from school and looks for ways in which these can be made safer and more sustainable for pupils, parents and teachers).

Unfortunately, RSOS assessments have had to be suspended due to the impacts of the pandemic and it is not currently possible to confirm when the assessment will take place.

When considering the requests and possible improvements, the available funding will also need to be established since if several changes are to be introduced the overall impacts of these would need to be considered as part of assessment and design work.

In advance of the assessment being completed, some initial comments have been provided below in response to the concerns raised, and solutions suggested, by the petitioners. Details of any relevant existing proposals have been included.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT/COMMENTS

a) Bagshot High Street – Narrow footways, suggested installation of guard railing and improvements to existing Zebra crossing.

Providing traffic lanes and footways to appropriate widths whilst also often having to accommodate parking can be particularly challenging in historic towns and villages. Often the available space will be very limited, and a balance has to be

struck between competing needs that will frequently require some compromises. This is the case in Chobham High Street where you have busy footways alongside an A-class road, as well as the provision of on-street parking to help support local businesses.

Removing the parking would potentially allow the footways to be widened in some sections. However, a previous proposal to remove the parking during peak traffic times met with strong objection and was not progressed. Any proposal to remove parking completely is therefore likely to provoke very significant objections especially at present when many businesses have been severely impacted by the pandemic.

Pedestrian guard railing needs to be set back from the edge of the road when it is installed to reduce the risk of it being struck by vehicles. Installing guard railing where footways are already narrow will therefore often reduce the available width to below an acceptable level.

There are existing proposals to introduce improvements to the Zebra crossing on the High Street, which are being funded by Chobham Parish Council and are due to be introduced before the end of March 2021. These involve replacing the faded traditional style belisha beacons with a new LED halo style beacons. The new beacons will remain highly visible in all conditions and will help further highlight the presence of the crossing to drivers.

b) Signing of Pedestrian Crossing Points

Warning signs can be erected on the approaches to a zebra crossing or a signal-controlled crossing when visibility of the crossing is restricted. Warning signs can only be erected on the approaches to uncontrolled pedestrian crossings on high speed roads. (Use of such signing more widely would result in a proliferation of signs, potentially undermining their effectiveness and adversely impacting on the environment).

The sign used to warn of the likelihood of encountering children in the road ahead is generally restricted to the immediate area outside a school or playground.

c) Signing/Traffic Calming Measures on Approach to School

Once traffic conditions have returned to nearer normal levels, a traffic survey will be undertaken near the school to assess whether there is a problem with high vehicle speeds.

There are currently no proposals to introduce traffic calming measures on the A319 Bagshot Road, and generally the introduction of traffic calming measures (such as speed cushions or speed tables) would not be considered on a strategic A-class road of this nature.

However, there is a proposal to extend the existing 30mph speed limit on Bagshot Road, which currently starts near the fire station, in a western direction to beyond

the entrance to the Chobham Adventure Farm. This may help reduce the speed of vehicles approaching the school when headed towards Chobham village centre.

A source of funding has yet to be identified to progress the proposal, but it is to be added to the Surrey Heath scheme list and considered for inclusion in future Local Committee work programmes.

An initial assessment indicates the existing signs on the approach to the school could be enhanced to provide improved warning to drivers to slow down. Improvements to signing and road markings will be considered in more detail as part of the RSOS assessment, with the aim of agreeing a proposal to be delivered from existing budgets (once new funding allocations are received for the 2021/22 financial year).

d) A319 Bagshot Road (Vicarage Road) – Request for improved pedestrian crossing facilities

There is an existing pedestrian island in Bagshot Road on the immediate approach to the mini-roundabout at its junction with the High Street, which can be used by parents and children who need to cross Bagshot Road on their route to and from school. The island allows pedestrians to cross each direction of traffic separately. Bagshot Road has a 2-lane approach to the mini-roundabout making it potentially more difficult for pedestrians to cross this direction of flow at the pedestrian island (the exit from the roundabout is single lane).

The petitioners have suggested widening the island and introducing a zebra crossing. Widening the island is a potential option but would require the approach to the mini-roundabout to be reduced to a single lane. This would have the benefit of pedestrians only having to cross a single lane of traffic when crossing to and from the central island from the northern side of Bagshot Road. A zebra crossing could also potentially be introduced in conjunction with a widened island. However, this would significantly increase costs and the reduction in lanes may reduce the need for one.

Reducing the approach to the mini-roundabout to a single lane could potentially lead to increased congestion. If such a proposal were to be considered further, then the possible impacts would need to be assessed in more detail.

Alternatively, there may be benefits in introducing a controlled crossing nearer the school if a suitable location could be identified. However, this may be difficult due the number of property accesses and the presence of the lay-by (which could potentially be removed).

The RSOS assessment will establish where pedestrians cross and how much difficulty they experience. This information will help determine whether there is a need to consider introducing improved pedestrian crossing facilities and which option(s) are most appropriate.

e) Chertsey Road (at junction with High Street/Windsor Road)

Concerns have previously been raised about this junction from both a driver and pedestrian perspective, and several studies have been undertaken to try and identify appropriate improvements. However, various constraints (including the space available within the limits of the public highway) limit the options available.

The latest study and consultation was undertaken in 2017. This considered various options for improving the junction including introducing traffic signals, which would enable controlled (push button) pedestrian crossing facilities to be incorporated into the junction. However, an assessment of this option suggested it would potentially cause unacceptable levels of additional congestion.

Other options such as changing the junction priorities or introducing a mini-roundabout with zebra crossings were also considered, but were assessed as not being appropriate on safety grounds. However, some improvements were made to the junction following the study and consultation. These included bringing the stop line forward to improve visibility for motorists exiting Chertsey Road and widening of the section of footway on the Chertsey Road/High Street corner.

Introducing a standalone zebra or signal controlled pedestrian crossing on the Chertsey Road arm of the junction would potentially be possible. However, due to the restricted forward visibility for drivers turning into Chertsey Road, it would need to be set back from the junction. This would take it off the desire line, meaning that pedestrians may continue to cross at the junction rather than using the crossing. The relatively narrow footways may also make it difficult to accommodate the required equipment.

There is an existing signal-controlled pedestrian crossing on Windsor Road near the Community Centre, approximately 150m north of its junction with Chertsey Road and the High Street. There are only a small number of properties on the eastern side of Windsor Road between the crossing and Chertsey Road. As such, most children and parents walking to the school can cross to the western side of Windsor Road using the signal-controlled crossing. This then avoids them having to cross Chertsey Road at its junction with Windsor Road and the High Street.

f) Station Road

Several requests have been received for the introduction of a signal controlled or zebra crossing on Station Road. There are several issues with such a suggestion, including identifying the most suitable location. For example, it has been suggested a crossing should be introduced near the Tesco express store. However, this would not benefit pedestrians walking between the recreation ground and village centre.

There are also a significant number of accesses to properties along Station Road as well as the bus stop, making it potentially difficult to find appropriate locations with sufficient space to enable a crossing to be installed. Over some lengths nearer the village centre the footways are also narrow which could cause difficulties for locating the equipment required for a controlled pedestrian crossing.

Further assessment is required to determine where pedestrians cross and whether they experience difficulties doing so. If a need to consider introducing improved pedestrian crossing facilities is identified, then the feasibility of different options would need to be examined.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The RSOS assessment will be undertaken once circumstances allow. The school and petitioners will be updated on the findings once it has been completed.

Together with the information provided by the petitioners, the findings of the assessment will help identify where problems exist, possible solutions and priorities.

It may be possible to deliver any lower cost solutions identified (such as improvements to signing and road markings) in the short term. Other options may require further assessment and feasibility work, and funding would need to be allocated to enable this to take place.

If more significant and costly improvements (such as introducing a new zebra or signal controlled crossing) are proposed following the assessment work, then they would be added to the Surrey Heath scheme list. They would then be assessed against several criteria and ranked against other schemes on the list and considered for inclusion in future Surrey Heath Local Committee works programmes (or progressed with an alternative source of funding if identified).

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Committee is asked to note that:

- (i) Once circumstances allow, an assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the county council's Road Safety Outside Schools policy. The assessment will further investigate the concerns raised by the petitioners, helping to identify locations where pedestrians experience problems as well as possible solutions.
- (ii) Once the assessment has been completed the school and petitioners will be updated on the findings, any proposed solutions and on the next steps.

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