

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****JOINT COMMITTEE (WOKING)****DATE: 24 MARCH 2021****SUBJECT: TRAFFIC CONGESTION CAUSED BY MCDONALD'S
DRIVE THRU, GOLDSWORTH ROAD, WOKING****DIVISION: GOLDSWORTH EAST AND HORSELL VILLAGE****PETITION DETAILS:**

A petition has been received asking the County Council to “review the traffic arrangements in Goldsworth Road at the junction with Poole Road, Woking, to prevent the access to McDonald’s drive-through restaurant causing access problems to homes and businesses. and gridlock to the traffic in that area at busy times.”

The petition includes the following details:

The access to the McDonalds drive-through restaurant in Poole Road, Woking, shares the access road with the access to the busy Morrisons store. At peak times, the traffic queueing for McDonalds blocks the traffic flow to Morrisons leading to severe congestion in the area. The most recent incident was on Friday 19th February at lunchtime. Alternative arrangements would appear to be possible to alleviate these issues and so this petition requests that Surrey County Council review the alternatives and implement necessary changes to prevent this issue reoccurring.

The petition included a link to a Facebook page where the following photographs of the traffic issues can be seen.



RESPONSE:

The McDonald's restaurant and "Drive-thru" are located off the roundabout at the end of the short length of dual carriageway, leading from Goldsworth Road, that is the access road to Morrison's Supermarket and Petrol Station.

Following the easing of restrictions after the first national lockdown last year, the re-opening of several McDonald's restaurants elsewhere in the country, as "Drive-thru" only, caused significant traffic problems in those areas. Consequently, in May 2020, shortly before the Goldsworth Road McDonald's re-opened, two virtual meetings were held to discuss the likely traffic issues and any possible mitigation. These meetings included the local highways team and officers from Surrey County Council's Streetworks Team (who co-ordinate road works, closures and events etc on the highway network to avoid conflicts and unnecessary impact on highway users). The meetings also included the Station Commander of Woking Fire Station, due to its proximity to McDonald's, and a representative from the restaurant; the second meeting also included the Morrison's Store Manager.

There is no legislation that would allow us to demand the closure of the drive thru due to traffic impact on the wider highway network.

The traffic issues that have resulted from the re-opening of the Drive-thru have resulted in a number of complaints to the local highways team. However, officers have observed that the situation is not continuous throughout the day.

Although the petition states that alternative arrangements would appear to be possible, no further details are given, and no alternative presented itself during the virtual meetings in May. It is not clear if the petition is hinting at the use of Poole Road as the route to McDonald's, but this was discussed at some length during the meetings. Whilst this route would provide a certain amount of alternative stacking space, it is not without its own problems and depending on the number of vehicles involved, the queue could still extend as far as Goldsworth Road. From the descriptions of the worst queuing that various residents have given us, it is clear that this would be the case. Traffic queuing along Poole Road would impact, to a greater degree than at present, any businesses that are operating within current restrictions along that road and Cherry Street.

There are bus stands on Poole Road and so it is highly likely that using the road as an alternative route would impact bus services and whilst bus patronage is lower due to the pandemic, it is still clearly a vital means of transport for some people.

Crucially, discussions with the Woking Borough Commander for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have confirmed that the option of using Poole Road would introduce additional operating difficulties for them. The proximity of the fire station to the McDonald's Drive-thru means that the fire service is already impacted by it but using Poole Road would make the situation worse for fire appliances when they return to the station via Butts Road. Although these vehicles would be returning from a call-out, it would undoubtedly affect the turn-around time for them before the next emergency.

Surrey Highways Officers have met with colleagues at Woking Borough Council to discuss this matter and accept that using Poole Road is not likely to solve all the problems and may make some elements worse. If the government's roadmap out of the Coronavirus pandemic can be followed, it is hoped that this issue will be relatively short lived.

Another traffic management meeting will be held to discuss this situation, including the option of using Poole Road but only if it can be made acceptable to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. However, a lot of consideration has already been given to this matter and it seems unlikely that any alternative will be identified that would give any real, overall benefit. However, it should be noted that if any alternative is identified, Surrey County Council would expect the cost to be borne by McDonald's rather than by the public.

RECOMMENDATION

The Local Committee is asked to note that:

- (i) Meetings were held prior to the reopening of the McDonald's Drive-thru to discuss possible measures to minimise the impact of queuing traffic.

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- (ii) No options could be identified for segregating McDonald's traffic from traffic that was either passing along Goldworth Road or trying to access Morrison's.
- (iii) Another meeting will be held to review the situation and identify any possible alternative routes to McDonald's.
- (iv) The cost of any traffic management measures should not be borne by Surrey County Council.

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