



SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (EPSOM & EWELL)

DATE: 28 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: REQUIRED IMPROVEMENT OF FOOTPATHS AROUND WALLACE FIELDS INFANT, NURSERY AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

DIVISION: EPSOM TOWN AND DOWNS

PETITIONS AND PETITION RESPONSES

DETAILS:

A petition has been received relating to the improvement of footpaths around Wallace Fields Infant, Nursery and Junior Schools. The petition has 118 signatories and reads as follows:

We, the undersigned, petition Surrey County Council to resurface the footpaths along Wallace Fields, from the site of Wallace Fields Infants School, along the full length of Wallace Fields and into Windmill Lane at least as far as number 37 Windmill Lane, where the existing paving slabs, which constitute the footpaths, have fallen into a state of disrepair to the extent of being dangerous. The protruding, cracked and wobbly paving slabs along these pathways are a hazard not only to the children walking or scooting to the schools, but also to their accompanying parents and grandparents, and cause numerous accidents and injuries on a weekly basis. Many sites have slabs which protrude higher than 2.5cm and are clearly a dangerous trip-hazard. The existing surface of these footpaths is simply no longer in a suitable state of repair to be deemed safe, particularly on a route frequented by school and nursery children, and resurfacing with a more suitable, safe surface should be prioritised.

The council has a duty of care to maintain the safety and usability of footpaths that are kept at public expense and must take all reasonable measures to prevent harm to footpath users. The council is breaching its duty of care, and therefore causing injuries to vulnerable footpath users, particularly children and their accompanying parents and grandparents, as described above. We ask the council to take the necessary corrective measures as a matter of urgency. A failure to do so will amount to negligence on the part of the council.

Lead petitioner: Joanna Brynteson (with support of Wallace Fields Infants School PTA)

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your petition regarding the condition of pavements around Wallace Fields Infant and Junior Schools, particularly along Wallace Fields and Windmill Lane in Epsom.

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I appreciate the concerns of parents and pupils regarding the condition of these pavements, and I am sorry to hear of accidents that have occurred. Assessments of these pavements were carried out by Surrey County Council Engineers in September 2021, for potential inclusion in Surrey County Council's planned works programme. Regretfully the outcome of these assessments advised we are unable to prioritise renewal of these pavements when compared against others across the county. To maximise funding from central government Surrey County Council uses asset management best practices guidance to manage its resources and develops a planned maintenance programme to improve the condition of the network. All pavements on the planned maintenance programme have been prioritised in accordance with our cabinet approved process. This process takes account of criteria including condition; network priority; risk; value for money and network management.

In response to observations of possible trip hazards by residents the pavements were reassessed in December 2021 and although the outcome has not changed, potential scheme details have been recorded on our systems to ensure assessment of condition scores are revisited periodically.

This reassessment also found a few safety defects at intervention level and works were ordered to carry out these repairs. All the pavements in Surrey, included those mentioned within this petition, are inspected on a regular schedule where defects are assessed against the criteria in our Highway Safety Inspection matrix, and those that meet the intervention criteria are fixed. We adopt a risk-based approach to determining priority of repairs on our network based on best practice as recommended in Well-managed Highways Infrastructure: A Code of Practice (Oct 2016). Wallace Fields and Windmill Lane are inspected annually, however residents can report any defects to us at any time by either using the ['report it'](#) tool on Surrey County Council's website or by telephoning our contact centre.

I understand this may be disappointing for the petitioners in terms of their desired outcome of full resurfacing of these pavements but hopefully demonstrates the council's endeavours to keep them and their relatives safe when travelling to and from school.

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

Contact Officer: Matt Gallop, Asset Management Team
