

Cabinet Member for Highways & Community Resilience Decisions

6 June 2023

TITLE: MIDDLETON RD / UPPER PARK RD RAILWAY BRIDGE**Statement:**

We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to Improve the safety for all roads users at & leading up to the railway bridge between Upper Park Road and Middleton Road.

Justification:

The bridge was last reviewed by the Surrey Health Local Committee in 2015, following a petition instigated by an incident involving a mother and child in a pram. they were hit by a car and the child was knocked out of the pram. Fortunately both with minor physical injuries.

The committee noted disappointment with the ensuing traffic report that considered options, but ultimately, whilst the danger was clearly acknowledged by all parties, removing overgrown vegetation was the extent of the solution. This was not the 'creative and incremental' solution we requested and expected.

8 years later, the issue has not gone away, it remains a danger, with frequent near-misses.

Pedestrians, cyclists and drivers who know the area, exercise great care in using the bridge. Those that don't know the area so well, are those that create most danger and are at most risk.

In a corporate environment, it's the reporting of 'near misses' that helps prevents accidents. Here, we need proactivity to avoid what local residents [and 455 petitioners in 2015] regard as an inevitable tragedy at some point in time.

The bridge sees heavy pedestrian usage around school hours from both directions ranging from the Crawley Ridge Nursery, Infant and Junior Schools to Collingwood College and 6th Form. It is also used as a general thoroughfare for dog walkers, cyclists and other pedestrians throughout the day due to its easy accessibility to the town centre and Barossa.

The bridge has significant danger factors: blind bends at each end; two way traffic with both sides filtered to the middle; no pedestrian-safe area; no pavement or lighting on the bridge; the central hump of the bridge is prone to black ice in the winter leading to loss of control of vehicle or footing; insufficient road signage & old markings; no change from the surrounding 30 mph zone traffic speed.

Submitted by: David Oakley

RESPONSE:

The County Council recognises the issues at this location and appreciates the concerns of residents and particularly those accessing it as pedestrians. A traffic survey following the previous petition (2015) identified the potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, particularly during school traffic hours. As a result, existing warning signs were improved to make it clearer to drivers who had the right of way. Other warning signs are in place to warn drivers of the road narrowing and the potential for pedestrians to be present.

Other options were considered at the time, details of each option are set out further below, but unfortunately their viability was limited. Officers will review the option for Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and will be contacting the local County Councillor to discuss options and costs for the possibility of installing these. However, it should be noted that legal advice would be needed to determine the process necessary to place a VAS on privately

maintained highway such as Middleton Road. Further details outlining the situation, the previous petition response and the options appraisal are set out below.

The situation:

Middleton Road is a Non-Maintainable Public Highway and is therefore a privately maintained road, including the surface of the railway bridge, over which public rights exist for all purposes. Middleton Road runs from just south of the railway bridge and travels northbound for approximately 800m finishing at a dead end. However, it also provides access to several residential cul-de-sacs and pedestrian/cycle access to the A30. Upper Park Road, a publicly maintainable highway, runs from the south of the railway bridge for approximately 820m until its junction with Heathcote Road/High Road, which provides access to Camberley Station and the centre of Camberley. Below is a plan showing the extent of Middleton Road, shaded in blue and the extent of Upper Park Road shown in yellow, over the railway bridge.

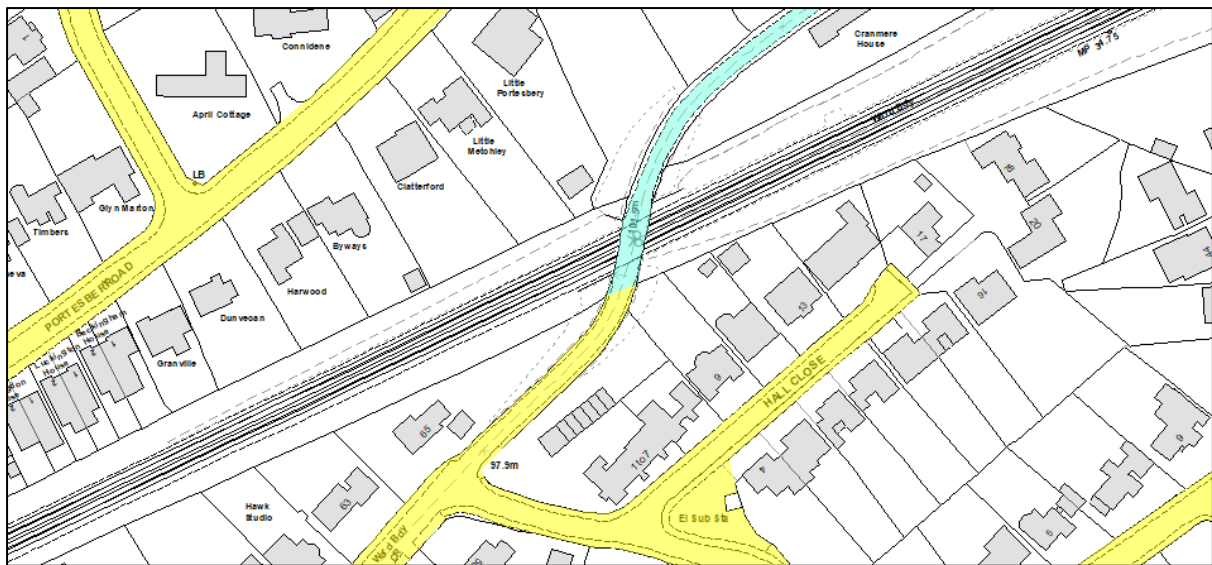


Image 1: Extent of privately maintained Middleton Road shown in blue and publicly maintained Middleton Road shown in yellow.

Network rail's ownership data also shows that the structure of the bridge and, short sections of land alongside the roads either side of the bridge, is owned by Network Rail as shown in the image below.

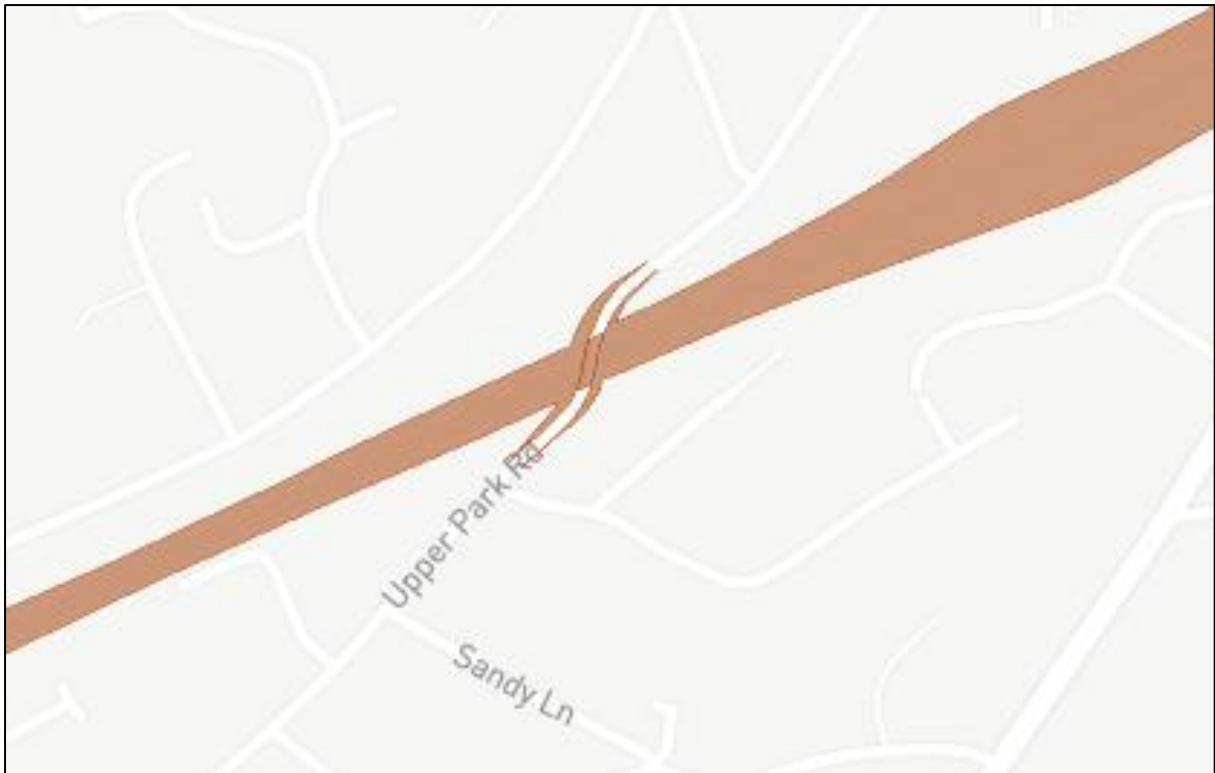


Image 2: Land owned by Network Rail (including the structure of the bridge) shown highlighted in brown

Whilst residents who live to the north of the railway line can use Middleton Road and the railway bridge to access the area to the south of the railway line, it is also possible to use Knightsbridge Road and Portesbery Road to access the same area, due to the presence of a level crossing on Heathcote Road/High Road. However, this is a slightly longer route.

Both Middleton Road and Upper Park Road turn just prior to the railway bridge, this restricts the visibility for drivers approaching the bridge and there is no pavement on either approach to the bridge or on the bridge itself.

The bridge is the only pedestrian access across the railway from Heathcote Road to Gibbet Lane and provides access for pedestrians to Crawley Ridge Junior School and Collingwood College.

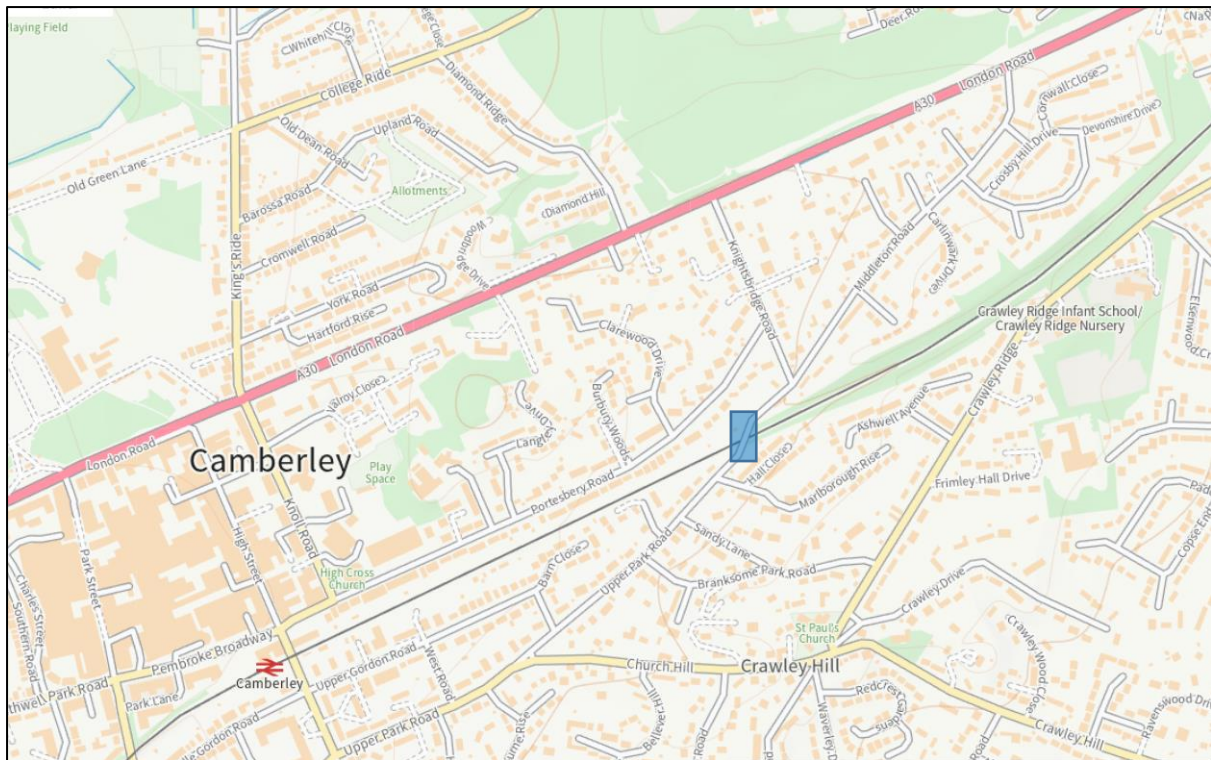


Image 3: Area of the bridge highlighted in blue.

Signs are in place to warn drivers on the approach to the bridge that the “road narrows ahead” and “pedestrians in the road ahead”. Priority signs are also present, giving traffic travelling over the bridge from Middleton Road, priority over traffic coming from Upper Park Road. GIVE WAY road markings are also present to further highlight this priority. SLOW markings and edge of carriageway markings to highlight the narrowness of the carriageway are also present. Hatched road markings are also present on the bridge to further highlight its narrowness.

The previous petition response:

Following the original petition that was presented to the local committee in July 2015, a site meeting was held with Surrey Highways officers, the petitioner and the county councillor Bill Chapman to review the situation. During that meeting, it was agreed that a traffic survey should be carried out to determine pedestrian and traffic use during school term time.

The data showed a peak in pedestrian usage between the hours of 08:00 and 09:00 and between 15:00 and 16:00. During these two hours a combined total of 189 cars, 13 Light Goods Vehicles, 2 Other Goods Vehicles (Class 1) and 2 Buses or Coaches drove over the bridge.

The data clearly showed that there is the potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles during these times. Therefore, it was agreed that the existing warning signs were to be improved by installing new signs with yellow backing and the priority give-way signs were altered to include a plate stating “Give way to oncoming vehicles” to make it clearer to drivers who had right of way when driving over the bridge. These improvements have been carried out.

Since the collision involving the adult and child pedestrian in April 2015, there have been no further personal injury collisions on the railway bridge or on either approach to the bridge

where there is no pavement. However, it is appreciated that residents remain concerned about road safety at this location.

Options appraisal:

During the site meeting with Surrey Highways officers, the petitioner and the county councillor Bill Chapman in July 2015 to review the situation, the following options were also considered.

Pedestrian footbridge next to the current railway bridge – this bridge is owned by Network Rail and therefore this would be something that they would have to construct. The cost of providing this kind of structure would likely be in excess of £1 million, so is unlikely to be a priority for Network Rail and given other possible options, this is not supported or recommended by Surrey Highways.

Alter verge to provide a new informal footway – due to the railway embankment any works to the verge would require detailed design work to consider the impact on the embankment and potential landslides. Given the potential cost of the detail design work required, as well as other possible options, it is not recommended that this option be taken further.

A new formal pavement and one-way system – due to the width of the existing highway the construction of any new pavement would narrow the highway to an extent that would prohibit 2 vehicles from passing each other. Therefore, the construction of any new formal pavement would require a formal one-way system to be installed or traffic signals on Middleton Road close to the junction with Knightsbridge Road, and on Upper Park Road close to the junction with Marlborough Rise so that drivers can travel only one direction at a time over the railway bridge. Both a one-way system and traffic signals would potentially increase the speed of traffic over the bridge. Therefore, traffic calming measures would also need to be installed to support either of these schemes. These measures would also cost more than £350,000, which would be more than the budget available for each Integrated Transport Scheme. This limit has been put in place to ensure that all communities have a fair opportunity to this funding and so that no community is left behind. It is therefore not recommended that this option be taken further.

Traffic calming measures - Traffic calming features are a potential option on the approach to the bridge, but national guidance suggests that for two cushions placed side by side, the road should be a minimum of 5.45m wide. The current carriageway is less than 5m, requiring two cushions to be placed at diagonals to each other. As pedestrians walk in the carriageway, there is a risk that the speed cushions would encourage drivers to drive closer to the edge of the carriageway and closer to pedestrians. Although the motorist is likely to be travelling at a lower speed, encouraging drivers closer to pedestrians is likely to increase fears. It is also worth noting that these features would only be on Upper Park Road approach to the bridge as the regulations only allow the introduction of traffic calming on adopted roads. A full width speed table could be a trip hazard for pedestrians who would have to walk over it given the lack of a separate footway. As a result, these proposals are not supported or recommended by Surrey Highways.

Road closure – Following the site meeting in July 2015 a further review of the situation raised another two possible options. One of these was to close the road to vehicle access across the bridge, providing access for pedestrians and cyclists only. This option would completely remove conflict between vehicles and pedestrians and would encourage its use by sustainable transport. However, restricting access on any highway should be carefully considered as it will result in all vehicles wanting to access/egress Middleton Road and those off it to use Portesbury Road and Knightsbridge Road. This will increase the number of

vehicles using Portesbury Road and Knightsbridge Road and therefore is likely to raise road safety concerns for those residents living on these roads. Residents on Middleton Road and those off it will also be required to travel a longer distance to access the area to the south of the railway line, and they therefore may not be supportive of this option. Therefore, this option is not supported or recommended by Surrey Highways at this time.

Vehicle Activated Signs – the final option proposed following the July 2015 site meeting was to install Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) to reinforce to motorists the possibility of pedestrians in the carriageway. This option is technically possible; however, because Middleton Road is a Non-Maintainable Public Highway, legal advice would need to be sought to determine the process necessary to place a VAS on privately maintained highway such as Middleton Road.

Any further measures on the highway would have to be prioritised from the budget available to the local County Councillor. Officers will be contacting the local County Councillor to discuss options and costs for the possibility of installing vehicle activated signs.

Kevin Deanus
Cabinet Member for Highways & Community Resilience
6 June 2023